

Freedom Struggle in Kashmir

F.M. HASSNAIN

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Preface

Exactly 134 years ago, the people of this state sustained a big stigma. The blot was in the shape of the sale of this land by the British to Gulab Singh in 1846 for Rs. 75 lakhs. Against this price, the state, along with its people, its rivers and its mountains, was sold as a salable commodity. This deal concerned a people with a glorious past, a land which had given birth to great and illustrious kings like Lalitaditya and Zain-ul-ab-Din and whose frontiers extended upto China, on the one side, and Peshawar, Punjab, Sutlej and Beas on the other. The people of this soil had once turned back the army of Akbar the Great. The same people were condemned to the extent that they were publicly auctioned through a sale deed.

The people of Kashmir struggled for a century to wipe out this ugly blot, which hung over the minds of sensitive Kashmiris, whether they lived here or fled the land under duress. One among them was the poet philosopher, Iqbal, who invoked world opinion against the sale deed in this manner:

*Badi saba agar-ba Geneva Guzar kuni,
Harfi Zama bi mujlisi akwam bazgo,
Dehqan wa kisht wa jo wa bayaban farokhtand,
Quomay farokhtand wa chi arzan farokhtand.*

(O Morning Breeze, if thou passeth by Geneva, convey an appeal from us to the League of Nations; they sold the farmer, the field, the rivulet and the yale; they sold a people and how cheaply!)

The people of Kashmir strove for over hundred years to remove this stigma. Our movement did not start in 1931. In fact, history has it, the people made efforts to erase the stain of slavery at various points of time. But it called for sacrifices. It called for the blood of the people of Kashmir. At last, with divine mercy, the blood flowed down the arteries of the martyrs whose sacrifices we commemorate today. These martyrs showed the path to the people as to how the stigma of slavery could be removed. It is to freshen the memory of the martyrs and their sacrifices that we assemble every year at their graveyard. We shower flowers on them and renew the pledge that never again shall we allow anybody to enter into a deal that would amount to subjugating this land, its people, its mountains and its rivers again.

In 1931, we took a plunge with the unshakable and irrepressible determination that either we free ourselves or vanish in the process. We stepped onto the field, armed with confidence the Almighty and in ourselves. Our steps did not halt till we wiped away the stigma of slavery. We ended the supremacy of the dynasty which had foisted itself on us claiming to have bought this land and its people, and considered itself to be the sole arbiter of their destiny. We axed the fetters that bound us for centuries. That freedom called for sacrifices is what repeatedly warrants the attention of the youth of today. After attaining freedom, one has to sustain it and ensure that the happenings which enslaved our past generations, do not recur.

In the past such happenings landed us and our ancestors into innumerable travails. Such conditions should not occur again as had in the past forced thousands of our suppressed and innocent compatriots to die of starvation or to flee their hearths to seek refuge in jungles. It can be possible only when we preserve our freedom. We should understand that constant vigil and alacrity are the price for freedom. Every year we observe 13th July as Martyrs' Day. Apparently, it is a function, but behind it lies a big philosophy and a lofty objective. The day reminds the youth of the times when this land, its people, its rivers and its mountains were sold as a commodity. What followed then is a tragic chapter of history, when during the autocratic rule our places of worship were turned into stables and armouries. Our shrines were burnt. The Khankah-i-Maulla escaped this wrath miraculously. The Jamia Masjid remained sealed for years, with even the *Azan* banned. If this were the plight of religious places, one could guess the plight of the people. One cannot suppress one's tears on going through the pages of history.

At last a time came when the providence took mercy on our pitiable conditions. The Almighty for gave us; it was the divine will that an urge for freedom was kindled in our hearts. We struggled and our youth shed their blood to remove the stains of slavery. This thirsty land wanted the same blood. The martyrs exposed their breasts before bullets. None of them got a bullet in his back. The commissions set up at that time were presided over by Britishers. They were confused that all the Kashmiris had got bullets on their breasts. This was the sentiment that enabled us to remove the stigma of bondage. But a question remained: that if we do not preserve and protect our freedom, we would find ourselves in the same conditions as in the past. It is for this reason that we assemble at the martyrs' graveyard every year. We take a pledge that we will uphold the honour and sanctity of the blood shed by the martyrs to wash off the stigma of our forefathers. We will never again allow our land and the people to be considered a salable commodity. It is unfortunate that such efforts are being made. People from outside cannot fathom the depth of the wounds of our hearts. We washed these stains by the blood of our martyrs. If anyone is under the impression that we will degenerate to the same plight, he is grossly mistaken.

Kashmiris are a people with a glorious past which touched low depths at one time and emerged out of it by offering a great many sacrifices. Then they achieved freedom. Today, we take a pledge before the martyrs that we will crown their dreams with success and make their sacrifices fruitful. I remember the scene of 13 July, 1931, when some martyrs were breathing their last and their relatives were crying here. At that time, one of the martyrs, before taking his last breath, called me and said, "Sheikh Sahib, we have discharged our duty. Now it is my wish that you will remind the people that they never forget their duty."

This wish of the martyrs echoes in my ears even today. I am worried; any negligence on our part may land us in the same conditions. Our state does have such people, who can afford to barter away the honour and dignity of the entire people, not to speak of their own, against a bottle of wine.

When such a situation arises you should make it clear that now there is not only one Sher-i-Kashmir but every child of Kashmir is Sher-i-Kashmir. Every child here has resolved that we will not allow any compromise with our honour and dignity, as was done by the British through Gulab Singh. A proof of this has to be given to the world. This can withstand and repulse any onslaught of the enemy. This shield is the National Conference, which has always challenged selfish interests, Maharaja Hari Singh and others. A shield which challenged Pakistan in 1947 and suffered the onslaughts in 1953. Everybody had taken us for a sold commodity, and a cowardly, backward people.

Pakistan also thought that by sending some soldiers and a few raiders, they would be able to occupy us. We said, you cannot dominate us as long as we are alive, you can advance only on our dead bodies. We have resolved that we will not allow anyone, whether he is a Hindu or a Muslim, Pakistani or an Indian, American or Russian, to play with our density, or accept a situation where we are forced to dance to somebody's tunes. We prefer death to such a life. We have seen many bitternesses in life. We have observed the darkened and gloomy faces of our brother and sisters, and the tears of their near and dear ones. At that time we resolved: either we change this life or we sacrifice our lives. We suffered untold miseries and numerous tortures were committed on us, but we stood like a rock, thinking that as long as blood flowed through our veins and there was life in us, we would not allow anyone to play with our destiny.

We will keep discharging our obligation for whatever time is left with us. But, the time has come that you take over the leadership and discharge the obligations. And, now it depends upon you whether you preserve the freedom or not. We effected the 134-year-old stigma of subjugation with the sacrifices of the martyrs. The martyrs also represent the martyrs laid to rest at other places in the state, like Rajouri, Poonch, Kotli, Jammu and other places. These martyrs offered the blood happily and courageously that was warranted to wipe away the stain of slavery. It is to be remembered that never shall such a weakness overtake us again. You have to see how this stigma affixed itself on

a people whose command held good up to China on one side and ruled half of India on the other.

What, after all, made the people of this land fall to such a despicable level in the eyes of the world that it was regarded as an assembly of living dead? None is to blame for it, as we ourselves erred by becoming a victim of mutual divisions.

If we live, we have to live with honour and dignity. A day of a lion's life is better than one hundred years of a jackal's. You live like lions and talk like lions so that the world is assured that none can trifle with your dignity and honour.

A major chunk of the population here is Muslim and as Muslims you are bound to follow the Holy Quran. The life of the Holy Prophet is a beacon light for you. You have to create faith in the Almighty God and yourselves and show to the world that Kashmiris are a people of character. With this alone you can forge ahead. You should abstain from the wanderings of the present day world. The wordly life alone was not the aim of our existence. Spiritual life should never be forgotten. As we seek food for bodies so do our souls demand nourishment, which is good deeds and lofty character. Have faith in God. Once you have faith in Him no power on earth can harm you.

July 13, 1980

Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah
Chief Minister Jammu and Kashmir.

Introduction

Since ancient times, Kashmir has been a meeting ground of many a varied civilisations and cultures. As such, their achievements are recorded in the annals of the Chinese, the Arabs and the Greeks. There were times, when they had developed political relations with foreign powers like China and some of their kings, like Lalitaditya and Shahab-ud-din were rulers of vast territories extending from Kabul to Qanauj. There was a time when the Kashmiri rulers rubbed shoulders with the Mughal Emperors. But a time came when they lost their independence and became slaves of the Mughals. Since then, they have suffered under various dynasties such as, the Afghans, the Duranis, the Descendents of Ranjit Singh and the progeny of Gulab Singh Dogra of Jammu. It is a miracle of history as to how, the people of Kashmir have come out alive after so many centuries of misrule and abuse. There have been times, when these people rose against powerful rulers like Akbar. There have been times when they survived due to their cleverness and occasionally they resorted to deceit to save themselves from extinction. Being crushed down by tyrants, it has become their trait to invite a powerful power to supercede an enslaver.

In this book, a small period of their struggle has been dealt-with. It was during this period (1931-1947) that they chalked out a political program for themselves in a manifestive known as "Naya Kashmir." What has happened to their aspirations is another story but it is fact that all Kashmiris, irrespective of their religious denominations, have opted for a secular, democratic and socialistic future for themselves and for their future generations.

Sher-i-Kashmir Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah is not a name of that foremost Kashmiri who fought for their rights throughout his life. It is a name of a period, a history, a people and an institution. His name is the history of sacrifices which were made by Kashmiris under his guidance, to redeem their glorious past and to attain their rightful position in the comity of nations. His name is enshrined in the heart of every Kashmiri for he has chalked out a life mission for them in his famous manifesto, known as "Naya Kashmir". For preface to this book on freedom struggle, I have chosen excerpts from his speech, which he made on the 13th of July, 1980.

I have used a mass of source material, both published and unpublished, in presenting my views on the importance of this movement. Nothing can be the last word in research, but I hope that this work would enable the Kashmiris to understand the significance and the importance of their struggle for independence from alien masters and foreign yoke.

I am grateful to all those, who supplied me with valuable material and photographs, relating to the subject. I have included certain important documents, both official and non-official, which have a bearing on the topic. I am thankful to those authors, whose works have been used during the preparation of this volume.

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The Sale of Kashmir

Kashmir will become the focus of Asiatic civilization.

—Vigni. 1142

The geographical position of Kashmir indicates in the best sense of the term, the heart of Asia. For centuries caravans have passed through this valley into Tajikistan, Sinkiang, Tibet, Punjab and Afghanistan. Thus it is a central place where a synthesis of various Asian cultures has been forged into one unique and combined stream. It has been a meeting place of various philosophies and religions and races. The Semites, the Aryans, the Buddhists, the Hindus, the Muslims and the Christians have completed there long journeys here in this land, which is known all over the world as heaven on earth. It is known and termed as *Kashir* and its inhabitants call themselves as *Kushur*. In the beginning the valley was a lake. Due to some natural phenomena, the water dried out and it became inhabited by tribes, especially the Nagas, Pisbchas and Kashas. Latter came the Semites, Aryans, Iranians, Turks, Kushans and the Mongols.

As such Kashmir abounds in the remains of antiquity. This valley is a happy combination of majestic mountains, of lovely rice and fruit fields, flowery meadows, and of lakes, streams and forests. It is nearly a hundred miles long and nearly 30 miles broad. Surrounded as it is by various ranges of the Himalayas, it has remained a secluded beauty.

Jawahar Lal Nehru, while giving a vivid picture of the valley had remarked :

“Like some supremely beautiful woman, whose beauty is almost impersonal and above human desire, such is Kashmir in all its feminine beauty of rivers and valley and lake and graceful trees. An yet another aspect of this majic beauty would come to view, a masculine one, of hard mountains and precipices and snow-capped peaks and glaciers, and cruel and fierce torrents rushing down to the valleys below”.¹

This very enchanting scenic beauty of Kashmir, its green fields, its forests and rivers, its lakes and springs, its flowers and fruits and such other beauties of

nature, become the cause of its slavery.² Kashmir has been like a beautiful woman who have had many husbands and who mutilated its beauty, from time to time.

For centuries, too, it had to pay a high price for its beauties. In the past invader after invader swept through and turned this little place of fertile soil and refreshing rivers into a holiday-ground for themselves and their lieutenants. The wretched people only knew peace and plenty when they bowed their heads willingly to the yoke and put aside all resistance. 'Probably, the people have in them still much of the old warlike spirit, only waiting to be roused by some powerful incentive, and the assurance that while fighting, their homes will not be plundered and broken up.'³

The Kashmiris have been oppressed in the past but they never lost the sight of that day when they will emerge as independent and free. It had been prophesied that "Kashmir will become the focus of Asiatic civilization, as miniature England in the heart of Asia. It will become the *sine qua non* of the oriental traveller, whether he will be disposed to consider it as the ultima Thule of the voyages, a resting place where he may start again for still more distant lands." In the medieval period of its history, the Kashmiris were considered "much more intelligent and industrious than the Indians. In poetry and science they are not inferior to the Persians. They are very active industrious."⁴ But after their subjugation by the Mughals, the enslaved people lost much of their valour and suffered tyranny of the worst kind. In the medieval period of our history, the Kashmiris were considered such more intelligent and industrious than the Indians. In poetry and science they are not inferior to the Persians. They are very active industrious.⁵ But after their subjugation by the Mughals, the enslaved people lost much of their valour and suffered tyranny of the worst kind.

Past Glory of Kashmir

Kashmiris have been conquered and reconquered by the invaders, who have murdered, oppressed and enslaved their ancestors and so ground the life and heart out of them that their better selves have been crushed.⁶ In ancient times, the grandeur of a king was measured by the extent of his conquest. The ancient kings of Kashmir too were anxious to extend their kingdom. Kashmir has produced many conquerors, whose exploits have covered many pages of history. Laltaditya, a king of Kashmir in the 8th century had political and military relations with the emperor of China. The Kashmir embassy arrived in the Chinese court in 713. Mehar Kula carried the Kashmiri arms to South India.⁷ He even invaded Ceylon.⁸ Jiapida subdued all the states on the borders of Kashmir. He over ran the Panjab and reached as far as Allahabad.⁹ Sultan Mahmud of Ghaznah led several attacks into India and he succeed in his raids. But he failed in Kashmir and his two attacks against Kashmir were refused by the Kashmiris. He attacked Kashmir in 1015, but failed.¹⁰ He led a second

attack in 1021-22 but without success. The Kashmiris held back the invaders by their inherent bravery and excellent morale.¹¹

One of the most remarkable rulers of Kashmir was Sultan Shab-ud-Din, who conquered Sind, Kabul, Hindu Kush and Kangra. Jonaraja says that the Sultan did not count that day in his life when he did not receive the news of some great exploit of his troops. Winter or summer, night and day, hunger or thirst, nothing daunted him from continuing his successful march.¹²

Sultan Zainabidin, the *Badshah* deputed his troops to regain Ladakh and Tibet, from the ruler of Khasgar.¹³ The Kashmiris fought bravely and defeated the Kashgarians.¹⁴ The Kashmiris brought Sind under the suzerainty of Badshah, when his nephew became its *Nazim*¹⁵ his kingdom extended from Sirhind to Peshawar.¹⁶

During the middle of the sixteenth century, chaos prevailed in Kashmir and led to its conquest and enslavement by Mirza Haider Duglat in about 1540 A.D. He followed the policy of divide and rule. Internecine warfare and fights started between rival groups as well as among the Shias and the Sunnies. Such a chaos weakened the Kashmiris and as such, they had to remain slaves of the Mughals for more than 100 years. But they fought again to snatch away their independence. The Chaks tried to consolidate the Kashmir Kingdom, but failed. The process of disintegration had set in, due to struggle between various rival factions and sects. The net result was that Kashmir was split into various parts and every fandal lord carved out his own principality. Gazi Khan ascended the throne of Kashmir in 1554. He was a strong man and a great conqueror. He conquered Ladakh, Gilgit, Baltistan, Hazara and Kishtwar and brought other rebellious principalities under control. Each province was given to the Kashmiri Faujdar.¹⁷ He crushed the nobles with much severity for he could not tolerate disobedience and aimed at regaining the past glory of Kashmir.

Intrigues

As in the past, a group of traitors headed by Malik Shams Chaodoora, went to Delhi to wait upon the Mughal Emperor. Humayun was requested to extend his rule over them. Nothing could have been more pleasing to the Mughals, than to see this deputation of Kashmiris asking for their own enslavement. They were the prized and honoured guests. A large aid in the shape of money, arms, ammunition and army was provided to them.¹⁸ Subsequently, an invasion on Kashmir was engineered by the Mughals, through the group of these Kashmiri traitors, which included Shams Raina, Lohar Dangray, Musa Malik. They entered Poonch and then proceeded towards Kashmir *via* Toshmaidan. After having crossed Drang they reached Hanjivera near Pattan and faced the Kashmiris, who fought desperately. Though the invaders gave a very brave account of themselves, they had to yield at last. The traitors were defeated and nearly 1700 prisoners were taken by the Kashmiris who butchered

the ring leaders including Shamas Raina.¹⁹ In accordance with the usual practice and in order to signify the victory, a huge tower was raised up of the heads of the enemy. The Kashmiris had once again triumphed.²⁰

A new batch of traitors arose and it included, Malik Mohamad Nazi, Lohar Dangray, Haji Banday and Yosaf Chak. This deputation went to Kara Bahadur, and requested him to invade Kashmir.²¹ The time was most opportune, because the Kashmir kingdom had not recovered fully from the previous invasion of the Mughals. He welcomed the offer and marched with an army of 12 thousand Mughal soldiers for the invasion of Kashmir. The invaders were guided by a few traitors and they easily occupied Rajauri, which was considered one of the northern gates of Kashmir. Gazi Khan proceeded to meet the enemy and the Kashmiris measured swords with the Mughal invaders. They fought boldly and desperately and inflicted heavy losses on the Mughals. The invaders left the field and the Kashmiris once again won the day against the Mughals. The Domba clan of the Kashmiris killed the major portion of the Mughal army and raised a huge tower from heads of the slain.²²

The story of the slavery of Kashmir begins with that of Akbar. The Mughals have employed their historians to paint very ugly pictures of the Kashmiri rulers and fan communal feeling among the Muslims. As such, we have very distorted accounts about the Chaks, which was the last independent dynasty of rulers in Kashmir. The Chaks of Kashmir were patriots who faced the invaders for nearly 50 years and saved Kashmir from the Mughal slavery.²³

Sultan Yosaf Shah Chak came to the throne in 1579. The Mughal emperor Akbar had designs on Kashmir and as such, deputed an army of 5,000 horsemen to conquer Kashmir. The Mughals were led by Raja Baghwan Dass and Shah Quli Maharam.²⁴ The Kashmiris stood divided among themselves, due to the activities of the Mughal spies, who had engineered fights between the Shias and the Sunnis of Kashmir.²⁵

Sultan Yosaf Shah was a simpleton and could not decide as to what was to be done. The Kashmiris wanted to fight and they told him to stand firm and oppose enemy at the mountain passes.²⁶ But the Sultan showed cowardice and accepted the advice of the Mughal spy, Mirza Moqeem, who had now become his chief minister. The Kashmiri army was posted on the borders of Kashmir and the spearhead of the Kashmir forces faced the Mughal invaders at Bigama, on the left side of the river Jhelum near Kathoi.²⁷ The Kashmiris inflicted heavy losses on the Mughals, whose limbs benumbed with cold and snow.²⁸ The Mughals sent a message to Sultan Yosaf Shah indicating that if defeated, Akbar will depute a hundred-fold strong army to attack Kashmir. The Sultan stealthily and secretly went over to the Mughals, leaving Kashmir to its fate. He had acted on the advice of the Mughal spy Mirza Moqeem, but still his action meant a stab in the chest of his motherland. He had scumbed to the treachery and had himself become a traitor to Kashmir by his foolish action.

The Kashmiri army declared Yaqub Shah as its leader. He fought the Mughals, inflicted losses on the enemy and even captured 3000 Mughals, who

were drowned in the river. As it rained heavily, the Mughals were held at bay for one month. The Kashmiris went on inflicting losses on the enemy.²⁹ Raja Baghwan Dass made peace with the Kashmiris and took away Yosuf Shah Chak with him to the Mughal court. Akbar broke faith with Yosaf Shah and detained him as a prisoner in Bihar, where he died in 1592.³⁰ A memorial slab was put up at the grave of this last independent ruler of Kashmir, on the 19th of January, 1977 by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, the Chief Minister of the Jammu and Kashmir State. It was after a lapse of about four centuries that a leader of Kashmir offered homage to a great and noble son of Kashmir on behalf of the Kashmiris.

End of Independence

Despite his father having been taken a prisoner by the Mughals, Yaqub Shah continued his struggle against them. Unfortunately the Kashmiri nobles started their internecine wars again. The Sultan suppressed the revolt at Sopur, but the Shia Sunni feuds ruined the unity of the Kashmiris. They fought each other and thus made work of the enemy very easy. The nobility cared a twopence for the freedom of Kashmir and they fought between themselves.³¹ Instead of facing the invaders, they diverted their energies towards raising the Shia Sunni issues. Though Sultan Yosuf Shah had become a prisoner in the hands of the Mughals, the Kashmir Sultanate had not fallen. Sultan Yaqub Shah proclaimed independence, *Khutba* was read in his name and coins were struck declaring him as Sultan of Kashmir. The Mughals had not achieved their object and Akbar was thinking of another and final attack on Kashmir.

Ali Dar, the Chief Minister of the Sultanate proved to be a worthless fellow, who cherished the hope of becoming the Sultan of Kashmir himself. In order to achieve his object, he began to enlist the support of some of the nobles to the dislike of the others. He raised his followers on communal lines, with the result that once again the nobles of the Sultanate fought as champions of the Shia and the Sunni sects, against each other. In a rebellion against the Sultan, Ali Dar and his followers were defeated and Mohamad Bhat become the new Chief Minister. He plunged into the task of making the Sultanate into the Shia State, with the result that atrocities were committed on the Sunni divines. Sultan Yaqub Shah, instead of taking measures to defend the incoming invasion of the Mughals, got himself engulfed into the Shia-Sunni tangle, which ultimately led to the murder of Qazi Musa, the Head Mufti of the Sunni Muslims. Though, the Sultan dismissed Mohamad Bhat and brought Nazuk Shah in his place, the resentment of the Sunni Muslims was at its highest peak throughout the valley. The Shia divines instead of preaching amity among the Muslims, preached hatred against the Sunnis, with the result that some of the Sunni divines approached Akbar to save them from the Shia wrath. Accordingly, an agreement³² was drawn between the Kashmiri delegation and the Mughal emperor embodying :

- (a) the Mughals shall not interfere into the religious affairs of the Kashmiris;
- (b) the Mughals shall not interfere into the sale price of food grain of Kashmir;
- (c) the Mughals shall not make the Kashmiri men as slaves or the Kashmiri women as concubines;
- (d) the Mughals shall not inflict oppression on the Kashmiris.
- (e) the Mughals shall not entrust them with authority, who have created turmoil in Kashmir.

Some of the Kashmiris had again assumed the role of the traitors and circumstances had led them to approach Akbar. The Kashmiri deputation had proposed the conquest of Kashmir, but Akbar had a bitter experience of the earliest failures and was not sure about the Kashmiris.³³ However, he agreed to send his forces for the conquest of the valley. This time, he deputed a large army of 60,000 soldiers, with 22 commanders.³⁴ Some of the Kashmiri nobles including Hyder Chah agreed to serve as guides to the Mughals. The mountain wardens and hilly chiefs were won over through bribes.³⁵ As such, most of the Kashmiri nobles and grandies went over to the enemy. The commanders of Sultan Yaqub proved traitors and defected or fought between themselves. The Mughal army went on advancing towards the capital where the Mughal spies had already prepared the ground. In the meanwhile, the Kashmiris were defeated by the Mughals and the enemy entered Srinagar in October 1586.³⁶ Yaqub Shah fled to Kishtwar.

The Mughals occupied the Sultanate and like every conqueror they ill-treated the vanquished. The Kashmiris had been mistaken, for they obtained the fruit of their folly and reaped the harvest of their blunder.

The Mughal soldiers let loose a reign of terror in Kashmir. A taste for destruction, loot, abduction, arson and rape took them to the towns and villages of Kashmir. The Kashmiris had learnt a bitter lesson and now they wished Yaqub to come again and be their Sultan. And when he came from Kishtwar, they flocked around him.³⁷ Some of the freedom fighters were led by Syed Abul Muali and villagers were in revolt, while the Mughal army was in occupation of Srinagar. Guerilla warfare continued up to nearly 3 months.³⁸ Some of the Kashmiri traitors like Khalil Baba and Mona Butt invited another contingent of the Mughal army to Kashmir under Syed Yosaf.³⁹ These traitors again deceived the Kashmiris and won over the feudal lords through bribes. The freedom fighters were captured and killed. Some of the Kashmiri leaders were imprisoned and their eyes were taken out by Mohamad Butt, under orders of the Mughal Governor.⁴⁰ Sultan Yakub Shah was defeated, due to treachery of the Kashmiri feudal lords. He ran away to Kishtwar. Thus independence of Kashmir ended in 1588 and an era of slavery started. The Mughals nearly exterminated the Chaks, who were brought in groups to the scaffold and butchered at the door of the Mughal Governor Hiqad Khan.⁴¹ The Chaks,

who were mostly Shias adopted the Sunni doctrines and changed their surnames from Chak to Shah and similar other pseudonyms.

Another Mughal Governor, Mohamad Guli Khan (1590-160) imposed heavy taxes on the Kashmir people, who appealed to Shah Jehan for justice. They suffered during the ruler of the Mughals.⁴² It was a long period of famine and floods. The Kashmiris were grounded to poverty.⁴³ Many died of starvation, their corpses remained without buried and animals feasted on them.⁴⁴ The Mughals made it a state policy to depute the Shia or the Sunni Governor after intervals, so as to ground down the factors among the Kashmiris. The net result was that the Muslims of Kashmir suffered atrocities from time to time at the hands of the Mughals. Hassan has given a long list of such atrocities. In 1753, Abul-Qasim, who was living in obscurity in Qalool Pora, Srinagar, assumed the leadership of the suffered and collected the disbanded soldiers under his banner. He defeated the Mughal remnants and took over administration, in his own hands, by re-establishing the independent Kashmir State. The Mughal rule came to an end with this event.⁴⁵

The Afghan Slavery

Now Afghans set their eyes on Kashmir. Ahmad Shah Abdali sent a force of 1,50,000 Afghans under the command of Abdullah Khan for the conquest of Kashmir. Abul-Qasim faced the invaders at Rajouri. He slew the traitor Kawaja Zahir, who had invited the Afghans. The Afghans received reinforcements in large number. Abul-Qasim fought bravely but was defeated.⁴⁶

Hence terminated the short lived independent State of Kashmir and it again became a colony of the Afghans. Under them, the Kashmiris were no better than slaves. During the Afghan rule, Kashmiris suffered due to oppression and tyranny. The Governors and other officers sent from Kabul and the Afghan soldiers behaved as masters of the soil and used it as a pleasure resort. Honour of no damsel was safe in their regime and there are still many stories of their highhandedness on the Kashmiri Pandit ladies. In fact, the Afghans, as they are rough, treated the Kashmiris very roughly and the masses prayed for deliverance. They again thought of getting deliverance through the aid of any other strong master, who could throw out the Afghans. At the same time, some elements thought of freeing Kashmir from foreigners. Wazir Fateh Mohamad having sought help from Maharaja Ranjit Singh of the Punjab invaded Kashmir in 1812, with the result that the hateful rule of the Afghans came to an end.⁴⁷

Now was the chance for the Kashmiris to usher their independence, but the chance was lost due to their divided loyalties. The Kashmiri could not produce an able leader, rather it was held at ransom by 3 traitors, called the three Birbals; Birbal Dhar, Birbal Kachru and Birbal Wangno. Out of the three the first was the arch traitor, who prepared the schemes of inviting the Sikhs,

in order to benefit his own person. In Kashmir, this maxim is remembered uptill now :

“When Kashmir is habitated, traitors get devastated, when Dhars are habitated, Kashmiris get devastated.”

Accordingly, some of the traitors succeeded in instigating Ranjit Singh to invade Kashmir in 1819, which he gladly did and enslaved Kashmir for a decade.

Azim Khan, the last Afghan Governor of Kashmir tried to enlist the support of the neighbouring chiefs to help him save Kashmir from the invasion by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He also made arrangements to guard the frontier posts and passes. Ranjit Singh deputed a strong army for the conquest of Kashmir and it reached Baramulla in July 1819. The Afghan and the Kashmiri troops of Azim Khan fell upon the invaders and defeated them. Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who waited at Poonch to receive the good news, left the place and flew back to Lahore.⁴⁸

Ranjit Singh took five years to equip himself thoroughly, both politically and militarily. At the time, Shan Shujah invaded Kabul at the instance of the British, Azim left for Kabul, entrusting the Kashmiri Governorship to his younger brother, Jabbar Khan.

Ranjit Singh's second invasion started in 1819. Azim Khan deputed his emissaries to the British for help but they refused to comply with his wishes. The Sikhs marched towards the valley from Rajouri and attacked it from the three sides. Jabbar Khan and his soldiers were defeated near Shupian, at a distance of 29 miles from Srinagar. He fled away from the valley along with his soldiers by the Baramulla route. Thus, Kashmir became a province of the Sikh Kingdom of the Punjab. Raj Kak Dhar, the arch traitor received a jagir from Ranjit Singh, for his loyal services.

During the twenty-seven years of the Sikh rule, the Kashmiris had to undergo hard labour to produce more and more for their masters. The Kashmiris suffered all the stresses and strains of political subjugation. It was a period of floods, famines and fires. Thousands of the hungry Kashmiris fled away from the valley to other parts of the country and new Kashmiri colonies of the immigrants grew up in the neighbouring hill States. The valley got depopulated due to the emigration of a considerable number of the Kashmiri peasants and shawl-weavers.⁴⁹ In times of distress and scarcity, the parents sold their little girls “at eight years of age and conveyed into the Punjab and to India.”⁵⁰

The Dogra Slavery

After the Sikhs, the Kashmir valley had to pass into the slavery of the Dogra Maharajas, who were thrust over Kashmir by the British. How did it happen, is another tale of suffering.

During the 18th century when the British were steadily extending their supremacy towards the north of India, they came into contact with the Russians who were advancing towards the southern Sultanates of Turkistan. The Central Asian countries, which now form part of the Soviet Russia had trade relations with India. In 1880, Emperor Paul of Russia, entered into an agreement with the French for organising a combined attack on India, through Kashmir. Finding her way obstructed, Russia then began to take interest in Persia and Afghanistan. By 1837, Persia had practically become subservient to Russia and she deputed a mission to Kabul to ask the Amir to join against the British. Auckland, the then British Governor General in India sent a special mission to Kabul under Alexander Burnes, in order to checkmate the Russian overtures to Kabul. This mission failed because the Government at Kabul wanted the British to help them in recovering Peshawar from Maharaja Ranjit Singh of the Punjab. Thus the British got alarmed, which resulted in the ill fated British expedition to Kabul and finally, a *status quo* in Afghanistan.

In 1845, the war broke out between the Sikhs and the British. The Sikh kingdom asked Raja Gulab Singh to render help because he was their feudatory, but he refused to comply because the British had already decided to do something for Gulab Singh.⁵¹ Lacking support of the most powerful feudatory of the kingdom, the war proved disastrous to the Sikhs. Having refused to fulfil his obligations as a feudatory of the Sikhs, he agreed to work as an intermediary in the conflict between the Sikhs and the British. He entered into negotiations with the British through his trusted agents and for this purpose he sent secret notes to Sir Henry Lawrence, who had become his personal friend. He was assured of the British support and was given certain secret promises through Anant Ram.⁵²

Consequently, a peace mission headed by Raja Gulab Singh as Prime Minister of the Lahore Darbar went to Kasur on the 14th of February, 1846 and discussed the terms of peace with the British. By the Treaty of Lahore, signed on the 20th February, 1846, the Sikhs were forced to cede to the British other territories such as Kashmir and Hazara and Gulab Singh agreed to pay the war indemnity. By this Treaty, the minor ruler, Maharaja Daleep Singh was rendered devoid of power, prestige and honour. He was forced to hand over a major portion of his territories to the British and pay a huge war indemnity. On the next day, by another Treaty with the British, Maharaja Daleep Singh agreed to keep the British army at Lahore and pay expenses for it.

Now was the time to fulfil promises made to Gulab Singh by the British. Raja Gulab Singh, who was working as plenipotentiary of the Sikh State, became the Maharaja of ‘Jammu, Kashmir and Tibet’, by the Treaty of Amritsar, which was concluded on March 16, 1846.⁵³ According to Article I of the Treaty, the East India Company made over to him :

“in independent possession all the hilly and mountainous country with its dependencies situated to the eastward of the river Indus and westward of the river Ravi, including Chamba.”

in consideration of the price, which is said to have been fixed at one crore of rupees and later on reduced to seventy-five lakhs. "On this occasion 'Maharaja' Gulab Singh stood up, and with folded hands, expressed his gratitude to the British viceroy—adding, without, however, any ironical meaning, that he was indeed his 'Zurkhrid' or gold-boughten slave".⁵⁴

The transfer of Kashmir to Gulab Singh requires to be viewed in a proper historical prospective, for it was a sequel to the Treaty of Lahore. It is not merely a commercial transaction but something more than that because the British had decided to,

"reward the forbearance of Gulab Singh, because this was in accordance with an intended policy."⁵⁵

It is clear that Kashmir was a reward to the traitor for his perfidy and "Gulab Singh was the only man to whom it could be well handed over".⁵⁶

It is a controversial point as to whether any amount was actually paid and adjusted in the books of the East India Company, or whether it was simply, an eye watch.

The whole transaction about the sale of Kashmir appears to have been completed under suspicious circumstances. In the first place, Maharaja Dalip Singh, as minor could not legally enter into any agreement, because any such document executed by an infant is null and void in law. Secondly, the British were not in active possession of Kashmir and as such, they had no right to transfer or sell anything which did not belong to them. Therefore, the sale price fixed at one crore and later on, reduced to seventy-five lakh, was simply a camouflage designed to veil the treachery. Gulab Singh was to be rewarded for his meritorious services to the British.⁵⁷

It may be noted that at the time of the signing of the Treaty of Amritsar, Gulab Singh had assured the British that he would be able to occupy Kashmir without any difficulty.⁵⁸ But he did know that as regards Kashmir a bitter opposition awaited him.

Kashmiri Uprising, 1847

Kashmir was held at that time by Sheikh Imam-ud-Din, who declared his independence and raised the banner of rebellion.⁵⁹ Gulab Singh deputed a few ill equipped regiments under Mathra Dass to defeat the Sheikh, but the Dogra soldiers along with their commander were cut to pieces. Gulab Singh got alarmed and opened a three front offensive. He collected soldiers, mercenaries and tribesmen from whatever part he could, and deputed a huge army under Lakhpat Rai to take over Kashmir. Secondly, he opened negotiations with the Sheikh, in order to lure him into submission. Thirdly, he deputed his agent Jawala Sahi to ask for British aid. He wrote several letters to the Governor

General and to Henry Lawrence, the British Resident at Lahore, imploring them to help him in the conquest of Kashmir.⁶⁰

By the time, the revolt had taken a unique turn. Sheikh Imam-ud-Din had no intention of holding Kashmir as a servant of Gulab Singh, nor had he any intention to be a feudatory of the Sikhs. He was very popular among the hill chiefs and wanted to take advantage of the disturbed conditions. In this choice he was urged by his wife, who was a strong woman, 'proud of her kin and blood'. As a staunch Muslim, she desired ascendancy of the Muslims, who were in majority in Kashmir. She was the brain behind the uprising and entreated her husband to take up arms against Gulab Singh.⁶¹ The British have spoken of her as "a bigoted Muslim, full of schemes for Mohammanadan ascendancy, one of those mischievous characters so common in the East, a harem politician". The Kashmiris know her as a lady of determined courage and character, revered by her subjects as *Madar-i-meharban* (kind mother), who took up arms for the freedom of Kashmiris and took a vow not to allow the Shaikh enter her chambers, until he fights the invaders.⁶²

The Sheikh also dreamt of becoming the Sultan of Kashmir and in this venture, he was assisted by the hill chiefs, the Sikh regiments, and his adherents. On the other side, Gulab Singh was told by the British to collect all the force at his disposal and despatch reinforcements to back the Dogra forces sent under Lakhpat Rai.⁶³ Accordingly, he deputed reinforcements to Kashmir under Ratnu, one of his able generals.⁶⁴ The Sheikh and his forces led an attack on the Dogra forces, which were cut into pieces. Lakhpat Rai and his able generals were killed, but Ratnu escaped and shut himself in the Hari Parbat Fort.

Agreement with the British

The British agreed to instal Gulab Singh in Kashmir, subject to the following conditions that :—

1. "he will give a fair and reasonable assistance to hill chiefs of Jammu territory;
2. the troops employed by him shall receive eight Kashmiri rupees monthly;
3. the Khakha and the Bomba chiefs shall be treated in all respects as they were treated by the Sikh Government;
4. portion of the land bordering on the territory of the British Government shall be set aside for the use of the chief of Rajouri, Jasrota and others;
5. the people of the higher and lower orders shall be treated with every consideration;
6. he shall dispose of at a *Khush Kharad* rate, the produce of the country, received as revenue and not to trade in it;
7. custom duties shall be collected at only specified places.

8. the Hindus and the Muslims shall be equally at liberty to follow the orecepts of their own religious;
9. no more than what has been determined in assessment will be taken from the farmers as revenue.
10. the *Begar* or forced labour will be paid at the rate of two *annas* per diem in future.⁶⁵

The above agreement was agreed to by Jawala Sahai, the representative of Gulab Singh at Simla in September 1846.

The Governor General desired that Gulab Singh be installed in Kashmir, by all possible means.⁶⁶ The British Government was in hot haste to end the uprising, which if continued would have developed into a big flare up and might have resulted into a regular war in a geographically difficult area. There existed commotion in Ladakh and a slight disturbance had occurred in Zaskar.⁶⁷

The Governor General ordered 6 regiments of Native Infantry, 2 regiments of irregular cavalry and 12 field guns, to move towards Jammu to protect the rear. The troops selected by the British for the subjugation of Kashmir were :

- (i) 5000 soldiers and 4 guns under Sher Singh,
- (ii) 2 regiments under Kahn Singh,
- (iii) 2 regiments under Doab Singh,
- (iv) 2 regiments and 2 guns under Immam Singh,
- (v) Captain Brind with 10 guns and ammunition.
- (vi) Her Majesty's 62 Regiment, 3 regiments of Native Infantry, 2 regiments of Cavalry and 12 guns to move to Lahore.
- (vii) Her Majesty's 80th Regiments, 3 regiments of Native Infantry and 12 guns to Lahore,
- (viii) Lieut Lumaden to lead the Sikh troops to Rajouri.
- (ix) Major General Litter to lead his forces to the Chinab,
- (x) Brigadier Wheeler to move the field force to Bhimber or Nowshera.

In the meanwhile, the British army, the Sikh forces and the Dogra soldiers joined under the overall command of Lawrence and proceeded towards Kashmir via Rajouri, who's chief, Mirza Faquir Ullah submitted.⁶⁸ This was the greatest blow to the Sheikh, who considered Rajouri as the gateway of Kashmir. At that very time, two *vakils* of the British namely, Fateh Ullah Khan and Hakim Rai, arrived in Srinagar and gave further shock treatment to him, with the result that he called his soldiers to lay down arms. He further sent his *vakils* to the hilly chiefs and asked them to submit.⁶⁹ He himself reached the camp of the British at Thanah on the 1st of November, 1846 and surrendered before the united pressure of the British, Lahore and Jammu authorities. Maharaja Gulab Singh, accompanied by Col. Lawrence and others entered Srinagar on the 9th of November, 1846. The capital city surrendered and in on time, the valley

returned to normalcy, but it meant that the Kashmiris had resisted for nearly 10 months.⁷⁰

It may be noted that while bringing Kashmir under the subjugation of Gulab Singh, the British Government did not even care to ascertain wishes of the Kashmiris. The whole business was transacted behind their back.⁷¹ That is why, the Kashmiris have continued to hate this transaction and in 1946, launched a big political movement against the Maharaja, named as the "Quit Kashmir" movement.⁷²

Gulab Singh, whose antecedents has caused his name to be hated by the Kashmiris was determined to make his power felt throughout his territorial acquisitions. As such, Kashmir became "the scene of vile oppression and abominable misrule and it remained trodden down and trampled".⁷³ He believed that his authority should be assured by force and his subjects should serve him as slaves. "Gulab Singh went beyond his predecessors in the gentle acts of undue taxation and extortion. They had been taxed heavily, it is true, but he sucked the very life blood of the people. They had laid violent hands on a large proportion of the fruits of the earth, the profits of the loom and the work of men's handle, but he skinned the very flints to fill his coffers."⁷⁴ At the outset of his reign, he confiscated all *jagirs* and declared that all lands in his subjugated territories of Kashmir and frontier illaqs belonged to him and the owners or the tillers of land were simply his tenants-at-will. This is one of the instances of the differential treatment that Kashmiris received under the Dogra rule. This was the first time in its history that the Kashmiris as well as people of frontier illaqs lost ownership of their own lands.⁷⁵

The Valley of Kashmir, predominantly populated by Muslims was surrounded by the other four Muslim States of Bhimbar, Rajori, Karnah and Kishtwar. With the assistance and force obtained from the British, Gulab Singh succeeded in liquidating all the above States. After bringing them under his subjugation he let lose a reign of terror in these areas, by killing members of the royal families. Most of the rulers and their kith and kin fled away in the adjoining British India to save their lives and honours. Some of them lived unknown as miserable creatures.⁷⁶ However, Gulab Singh succeeded in catching hold of some of the Muslim chiefs, some of them were blinded and some were skinned alive. During this period, when a Muslim chief from Poonch was brought before Gulab Singh, he ordered him to be fleeced alive. When his legs were being skinned, the son of Gulab Singh could not witness this pathetic sight and wanted to withdraw. Gulab Singh, while holding the neck of his son admonished him saying: "If you show cowardice, how can you rule over your subjects."⁷⁷

First Labour Unrest

In order to extract work on behalf of the Government, Gulab Singh fixed a number of men in each village to do 'begar' or forced labour, on the beck

and call of the officers. Young and old were dragged like slaves out of their huts and against their will, to carry loads for the officials and the Government.⁷⁸ "These unfortunate people, who were dragged from their homes and families to 'trudge' for months, perished of hunger and thirst on the road side or died of cold on the snowy passes."⁷⁹ The next step, which the Maharaja took was to fall upon the savings of artisen especially the shawl weavers.⁸⁰ He imposed heavy taxes on this industry and imposed other duties such as a pool tax of Rs. 4,700 per annum on each shawl weaver. In order to ensure a constant flow of income, he did not allow a worker, whether half blind or full blind to leave his loom, without a substitute. He also charged an *ad valorem* duty of 25 per cent on each shawl. Besides this, his officials charged their illegal exactions, which also amounted to 25 per cent of the cost. In face of such oppression, the workers started feeling from the valley.⁸¹ Gulab Singh imposed a tax on every shop at Rs. 120 per annum and Rs. 60 per annum for new shops.⁸² Accordingly, in 1897 the owners of the shawl factories as well as other workers were greatly agitated and presented their grievances before George Taylor.⁸³ They prayed that:

- (a) various kinds of taxes, such as *Baj*, *Nazarana*, etc., be reduced;
- (b) wages of the labour be fixed; and
- (c) Government should establish a rule of law in respect of this industry and codify it.

As their grievances were not redressed, they struck work and set out for migration towards the Punjab in large numbers. The Maharaja, who was bent upon making his power felt suppressed this uprising with an iron head.⁸⁴ Nearly 4,000 workers set out for Lahore, along with the residents of a few villages. On the whole the people starved and it aroused misgivings in the minds of the British Government about the internal administration of Gulab Singh. Harding asked the Maharaja in 1848 to effect necessary improvements in his administration.⁸⁵ However, the seeds of unrest had been sown in the body politic of Kashmir and the shawl workers again rose in 1865.

Shawl-Bauf Agitation, 1865

It has been started earlier that the Kashmiris, practically starved during the early period of the Dogra rule. Famine conditions had become acute by 1865 and the masses had hardly reconciled to the Dogra rule. Their economic ruin aggravated the situation and people had to run towards the Punjab. The shawl workers had given lead in this respect when in 1847 they had started their migration marches towards Lahore. A major portion of farmers and workers migrated towards the plains between 1865 and 1870. Distressing news began to be published in many newspapers in India about the famine conditions prevalent in Kashmir. It was claimed that atrocities had been committed by

the Dogra soldiers on the starving people. On the other hand the Maharaja took steps to suppress adverse news. Pandit Har Gopal, who was a pleader, informed the British Government that in order to stop the Kashmiri migration, nearly one hundred famine stricken people had been got downed in the Wular lake.⁸⁶ It was Robert Throp, who wrote numerous articles for the English newspapers about the plight of the Kashmiris. In fact he is one of foremost fighters for freedom in Kashmir. During his stay in Kashmir, he collected valuable information regarding prosecution of the Kashmiri people and brought it to the notice of the British Indian Government. Starvation and famine conditions produced mass discontentment in the valley. The worst sufferers were the shawl workers. The people had no way out except to migrate towards the plains or die of starvation. Migration of the Kashmiris to the Punjab resulted in defamation of the Maharaja, who did not like feeling of the people from the valley and as such sealed the frontiers.

In April 1865, the Kashmiris agitated against the atrocities of the officials. The shawl workers were in the forefront of the struggle and it was a unique and an organised rising. On the historic day of 29th April, 1865, the workers joined the struggle to obtain their demands. It was perhaps the first organised demands day in the history of class struggle in India. The workers from all parts of the city, marched in a procession towards Zaldagar. They raised slogans and burnt effigy of Raj Kak Dhar, the *Darooga* of the Shawl Department. Kripa Ram, who was the Governor of Kashmir at that time, decided to crush the uprising with a strong hand. The Dogra forces at Srinagar were sent under the Command of Bajay Singh to deal with the procession. All the workers were surrounded and then charged with guns and spears. After some deaths, the agitators fled away towards the bridge of Haji Rather but most of them fell into a marshy canal and got drowned. Hundred of workers suffered minor and major injuries and at least 28 dead bodies were collected by the people. In the freedom struggle these 28 unknown martyrs have played an important role.⁸⁷

As soon as the Maharaja received information about this agitation, he ordered that the rebels be dealt with very strictly. He ordered that dead bodies afloat the water be got buried secretly.⁸⁸ He also desired that as directed earlier, punitive fines be imposed on workers, *patwaris* and others, who had taken part in the agitation. He further ordered that punitive fines be realized from all agitators and their leaders be arrested and punished.⁸⁹ The agitation was suppressed ruthlessly. The leaders of the struggle Sheikh Rasool, Abli Baba, Qudda Lala and Sona Shah, who had been arrested, were brought to the Shergarhi palace and beaten mercilessly. They were thrown in a dungeon. Sheikh Rasool and Abli Baba died of atrocities. In the meanwhile, a heavy fine of Rs. 50,000 each was imposed on all the four leaders. And when it came to light that they could not pay such a huge sum, it was proposed to be reduced to Rs. 25,000 in each case. But the Maharaja did not agree to this remission, for he wanted to make it, a test case and an example for his subjects. The other

two leaders were sent to Jammu to be imprisoned in the Bahu Fort. Besides the above, hundreds of agitators were arrested and imprisoned in the prison of Habak. Most of them died of severe cold and starvation. Perhaps, this was the first organised demands day of workers in the whole of India. The British Government of India deputed a fact-finding body to Kashmir but it could not sympathise with the workers agitation in a princely State. Such agitations were termed by them as danger signals for imperialism. It were the British who had placed the whole Muslim population of Kashmir and adjoining areas and regions under the direct rule of a Hindu Maharaja. Under such circumstances, there seemed no possibility of obtaining deliverance from the Maharaja. Thus wrote the *Friend of India* in August 1970 :

“the great mass of the people are Mohamedans and they hate the rule of a Hindu with an intensely bitter hatred. In fact, they are prevented from rebelling, by the belief that the Raja would be supported by the whole force of the British Government, against which they know, all resistance would be unavailing.”

This agitation has also been named as the “Khandwaw” agitation because the apprentice workers are termed as Khandwaw in Kashmiri.

Maharaja Pratap Singh

Pratap Singh became the Maharaja of Kashmir in 1885. His accession was not acceptable to Amar Singh who did not consider him as his real elder brother. As such, intrigues against him started from the outset and newspapers were hired to start a malicious propaganda against him. These purchased writers wanted to convince the British Government of India that Pratap Singh was not capable of ruling a strategic State of Jammu & Kashmir. Even he was involved in a conspiracy case against the British. Under such circumstances, the Maharaja absorbed himself in prayers and witchcraft to save his position. The net result was that he came under the spell of the Kashmiri Pandits, who took undue advantages from him. They would invoke Tantric powers from gods and goddesses to save him and he would gladly believe them. A time came when he involved himself in such Shakta practices. On the other side, Amar Singh complained that the Maharaja was encircled by Kashmiris of low repute and was ignoring his duties as a ruler. The net result of this fight between the two claimants was that the British Government of India started planting their own officers in the State.

During Pratap Singh's rule, the worse sufferers were the Muslims of Kashmir. While the Maharaja patronised the Kashmiri Pandits, his Hindu officers inflicted untold miseries on the Kashmiri Muslims.⁹⁰ Brought up under suspicion, he became very orthodox and would do nothing except under the advice of the Brahmins. These priests controlled his life and he would not even eat or drink without their advice. These people filled his heart with malice

against Muslims with the result that many capable Muslim employees of the State Government were either removed from service or externed. All this was achieved by the Kashmiri Pandits in a planned way.⁹¹

The relations between Pratap Singh and the British had become somewhat strained. By 1885 the British succeeded in installing a whole time Resident in Kashmir.⁹² The Maharaja was forced to transfer homers of administration to a Council headed by Raja Amar Singh, subject to the over all control of the British Resident. In 1889 Pratap Singh, was charged with having intrigued with Russia and Dalip Singh against the British, which resulted in his abdication. Nearly 3 dozen letters written in Dogri, sent by him for translation and despatch to the Editor of the Tribune, Lahore were intercepted. Raja Amar Singh and his colleagues testified to the handwriting. It produced a sensation and the British Deptt. it a secret, list other chiefs start conspire with foreign powers.⁹³

After his deposition, the Maharaja resorted to witch-craft and brought about the deaths of his enemies Amar Singh, Ram Singh, Col. Nisbet, Bhag Ram and others. It was in 1861, that the Maharaja had patronised a scheme of conversions among the Muslims but the Brahmins of Benaras had not consented, for according to them, once a Hindu changes his religion, he can in no case join the Hindu fold again. As such Ranbir Singh had abandoned the scheme, but it was revived during the rule of Pratap Singh, who gave his full patronage to such a venture.⁹⁴ It was in the year 1923, Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya met the Maharaja and suggested such operations of conversions of the Muslims. Sensing a danger to their existence, a few of the social and religious organisations among the Muslims, like the Anjuman Nasrat-ul-Islam, Anjuman Hamdarad Islam and Anjuman Islamia from Srinagar and the Youngmen Muslim Association and Anjuman Islamia from Jammu, came forward and started a counter attack, by inviting the Muslim missionaries to counteract the propaganda of the Hindu missionaries. The net result was the rousing of emotions among the Muslims who had remained in slumber for centuries.⁹⁵

During this period, a scheme was hatched to establish a Hindu State from Kashmir to Afghanistan by the extremist elements among the Hindus.⁹⁶ Side by side, another scheme was formulated to establish a Hindu theocratic government in the whole of India. In this connection, it was declared :

“We will also show wonders. This flower will bloom from Calcutta to Kabul and from Kashmir to Cape Comerin. This wonder is the wonder of unity among the Hindus of the Panjab and the unity of the Hindus. This wonder will establish a Hindu State, in which conversions will be completed to purify the masses. Both the Frontier Province and Afghanistan will be conquered.”⁹⁷

“When the Hindus will obtain independence from the British, we will declare our policy towards the Muslims and the Christians. We will not enter into compromise but declare the rights and duties of the Muslims

and the Christians in the Hindu State and also the terms and conditions under which, they could be converted into Hindu religion."⁹⁸

Kashmir in Anglo-Russian Politics

As seen earlier, fear of Russian prompted the British to attach much importance to Kashmir and its surrounding areas. This phobia did not extinct with the rise of the Socialistic regime in Russia after November, 1917. In fact their worries increased because the new Socialistic Russia aspired for a world revolution. Lenin spoke of the British as "rapacious extortioners and plunderers" and incited Indians to rebellion.⁹⁹ Lenin also made a special appeal to the Muslims of India calling on them to over-throw the British. As the same time, Afghanistan asserted its independence from the British supremacy. The Amir wrote to Lenin expressing his pleasure at the success of the Revolution. Russia had fortified its position in Central Asia. The British had to be vigilant because the Russians had organised their position on the north western frontiers of India.¹⁰⁰ They felt that the vigilance in Kashmir could not be relaxed, more so, when the Kashmiri Muslims had started demanding their rights. They asked for educational facilities and the Government reluctantly invited the Educational Commissioner with the Government of India to make recommendations on the subject.¹⁰¹ The agriculturists were demanding proprietary rights for all lands from the Maharaja, who contended that :

"the proprietary rights in all the lands of Kashmir belong to the Ruling Chief exclusively for the simple reason that the territories of Kashmir were purchased by my late lamented grand-father, Maharaja Gulab Singh."

Seeds of Unrest

Under the overall control of the British, the civil and the military administration of the State was re-organised on modern lines. The Resident put the British officers in charge of important Departments and most of them worked very hard. One such officer was Lawrence, who carried out the land settlement and revenue assessment in the valley. English was introduced in the schools. The Maharaja's Government imported a large number of outsiders as officers into the State mainly from the Panjab, to rule over the natives.

"Armies of outsiders trailed behind the officers from the plains, with no more interest than to draw as much as they could, and then depart leaving behind their kindred as successors to continue the drain; and thus was established a hierarchy in the services with the result that profits and wealth passed into the hands of the outsiders and the indigenous subjects lost enterprise and independence."

The Muslims had remained backward in education, but the import of the outsiders had become a problem for the Pandits of the valley, who were educated and lived on services only. While the Muslim peasantry groaned under the burden of *begar* and heavy taxes, the Pandit elite strongly resented, what they termed as foreign domination. Thus, the struggle for rights of the people, living in the State against the imported outsiders, took a definite shape.

By 1910, the Muslims had also become conscious and felt agitated. They demanded the provision of educational facilities. A memorandum to this effect was presented to the Maharaja by the All India Mohammadan Educational Conference. In 1916, Sharp made many recommendations for education of the Muslims, but the Maharaja was not interested in educating his subjects. In 1920, they prayed that "His Majesty by his royal grace may be pleased to extend to the people of Kashmir, new light of equality and self determination".¹⁰² Having failed to invite the British, they submitted a memorandum of grievances to the Viceroy of India in 1924. The memorandum, among other things demanded :

- (a) proprietary rights of land to the peasants of Kashmir,
- (b) equitable representation of the Muslims in the services,
- (c) inclusion of the Muslims in the Council of Ministers,
- (d) Educational facilities for the Muslims,
- (e) extension of the State Co-operatives,
- (f) absolute abolition of the *begar* and other taxes,
- (g) government contracts to be given to the Muslims,
- (h) immediate release of mosques and other places of worship to the Muslims, and
- (i) non-interference into the religious affairs of the Muslims.

The Viceroy forwarded this memorandum to the Maharaja who appointed a Committee of 3 members to look into the grievances. Strongly enough, the Committee reported that there was no substance in the memorandum. The Maharaja became angry with the signatories of this document and deported Khawaja Shad-ud-Din Shawl and Khawaja Noor Shah, from the State. The *jagirs* of Khawaja Hassan Shah and Syed Hassan Shah Jalali were rescinded. The other signatories, the two Mir Waiz were reprimanded and let off with stern warning.

Silk Factory Agitation

In the same year, the Srinagar city saw demonstrations of the workers of the Silk Factory, who demanded more wages. The city people also started an agitation in favour of the externed leaders. There was but small agitations and the highest turmoil was yet to come. The Government took stern measures against the agitators, who were oppressed. The people would raise objectional

slogans against the Maharaja's Government from the house roofs during nights.¹⁰³

After the death of Maharaja Pratap Singh, his nephew Hari Singh, the son of Raja Amar Singh became the Maharaja in September 1925. He had returned from London, in much disgrace "as Mr. A in the £ 30,00,000 blackmail case and Sir Simon had called him a poor, green shivering subject wretch".¹⁰⁴ After his ascending, he announced a few reforms, but he was not prepared for radical changes. The Kashmiri Muslims were aspiring for more jobs and there existed a current of indignation against the outsiders, who were imported to rule over the locals. The Maharaja had to bow and introduced the State Subject's law, to protect the interests of the sons of the soil.¹⁰⁵

The British took every measure to stop the wave of political unrest in the British India, as well as, in the native States. But the urge for freedom manifested itself in one way or the other. The Press in India wrote adversely about Kashmir and its administration.

In the same year, the Indian National Congress met at Lahore, not away from the border of Jammu and Kashmir. Its resolutions found an echo in the valley also. In early 1930's the waves of the non-violence movement were sweeping India, and patriots in Kashmir, inspired by this spirit of revolt, renewed their political activities.¹⁰⁷ Naturally the British, alarmed by possible repercussions in the British India, could neither tolerate nor sympathise with the uprising of Kashmiri Muslims against a Hindu Maharaja. They had attained supremacy in India by eliminating the Mughal Emperor, who was a Muslim. After the first organised revolt in 1857, when it was intended to bring back the Mughal Emperor, the British became antagonist towards Muslims. Henceforth, they started a policy of keeping them suppressed in all walks of life and pampered the Hindus of India in various ways. This was the real background of the so called "divide and rule" policy of the British rule in India. In Kashmir, the majority of the people consisted of the Muslims who had cultural, religious and trade links with the Muslims of Central Asia. It was a dangerous situation of the British Empire in India. Hence, at any cost, they had to support the Hindu Maharaja, who had been installed over the Muslims of Kashmir. The non-Muslim population of Kashmir considered the Hindu Maharaja as their protector, who in his turn appointed them on all key posts. Thus, the seeds of agitation in Kashmir were sown by the Dogra Maharaja who patronised non-Muslims over Muslims. In this adventure, he had the full support of the paramount power i.e., the then British Government in India.

Press and Kashmir

It was the press, which told the world about the miserable plight of the Muslims in the Jammu and Kashmir State. The first paper, which wrote about it was *Chowdween Sadi*, from Rawalpindi and the first article came in its issue of 23rd July, 1985. This paper then continued writing about the mal-administration of the Maharaja. Another weekly, entitled *Gulshan-i-Kashmir* was started by

Taj-ud-din Taj in 1901, which became dedicated to the cause of the Kashmiris. Munshi Mohamad Din Fauq started his Kashmiri Magazine in 1906 from Lahore, it was converted into a newspaper under the title of Kashmir and continued upto 1924. This paper has done a yuman's service to the Kashmiris and their cause. The other papers, which dedicated their writings to the cause of the Kashmiris were, *Inqilab*, *Siyasat*, *Sunrise*, *Muslim Outlook*, *Farooq* and *Alfazal*, all from Panjab, because no paper could be issued from Kashmir.

The first association to plead the cause of the Kashmiris was founded at Lahore in 1896 under the name of Majlas Kashmiri Musalman. Its founders included Shaikh Mohamad Iqbal, Khawaja Rahim Baksh, and Mian Karim Baksh, all of whom had intimate connections with Kashmir, for their forefathers had migrated due to oppression.

A bigger organisation with the name of Muslim Kashmiri Conference came into existence in 1901 and held its first session at Amritsar. In 1911, the above organisation assumed an all India character and was re-named as All India Muslim Kashmiri Conference. The Maharaja refused permission to this organisation to hold its meeting at Srinagar in 1924. This organisation became the spearhead of revolution in Kashmir.

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Kashmir Awakes

“Demolish this edifice of injustice, cruelty and subjugation.”
—*Abdul Qadeer Khan Ghazi, 1931*

A careful study of the history of Kashmir reveals that its people have suffered untold miseries at the hands of alien rulers. The Mughals, the Afghans, the Sikh and the Dogra rulers considered these people not better than animals. Under the Dogra Maharajas, the peasants were deprived of their agricultural produce and very little was left to them for sustenance. The artisans, like the shawl weavers, the papier machi workers and other workers were made to work for the rich until they became blind. The beautiful Kashmiris were used as animals by the autocrats. *Begar* or the forced labour was the order of the day and those who refused to oblige, were fleeced alive in public. The whole valley was parcelled out among the ruling clan.¹

The people in the valley were labouring under many disadvantages. The Muslims, who formed a majority in Kashmir, were rendered absolutely illiterate, ground down under poverty and under very low conditions of living. They were governed by the Dogra Maharaja like dumb driven cattle.

Creatures of Toil

Many thousand of the Muslim peasantry was driven off, every year to toil as creatures of burden, towards Gilgit. The Dogra Maharajas, used the Kashmiri Muslims as carriers of supplies for the army, which was deployed for subjugation of the tribal people on the frontiers. The unfortunate Kashmiris were dragged from their homes and families to trudge for months over the difficult passes of that mountaineous country.

“They fall on the road to perish of hunger and thirst, and thinly clad, as they are, are destroyed in hundreds, at a time, by the cold on the snowy peaks. When a man is seized for this form of *begar*, his wives and children hang upon him, weeping, taking it almost for granted, that they will never see him more. A gang of these poor creatures heavily laden with grain, toiling along the desert crags between Astor and Gilgit, on a burning

summer day, urged on by a sepoy guard, is perhaps as pitiable a spectacle as any to be seen on the roads of the Siberia. But these are not convicts and criminals, they are Muslim farmers, harmless subjects of the Maharaja”.²

The above account reveals that the Kashmiri Muslims were treated as beasts of burden during summer months, when they were needed in the fields. Thus the crops suffered resulting in occurrence of severe famines. Naturally, the people had to runaway towards the plains. Hundreds of the people died of starvation every year and the valley was laid waste.

Corrupt Administration

It will be seen that during the Dogra rule the minorities, especially the Pandits, had monopolised the subordinate services and even some amongst them had risen to higher posts. On the other hand, the Muslims, who formed majority in the valley, were totally absent in the administrative set-up of the Maharajas. The Pandits, who worked as *Patwaris*, *Kardars*, *Shakdars*, *Tehsildars*, *Mohrirs* and clerks actually came into contact with the masses in day-to-day public dealings. As the Muslims were the aggrieved party, they considered the Pandits as henchmen of the Dogra Maharaja. Poorly paid as these officials were, they resorted to corruption of all kinds and the burden fell on the Muslims.

“The bulk of the Muslim population were tillers, labourers and artisans—classes which were an excellent target of exploitation by the richer sections of the society which overwhelmingly consisted of non-Muslims”.³

For explaining a graphic description of an official is given as under :

“On the day, the Naib Tehsildar had to visit the village the whole populace, men, women and children would wait on both sides of the road leading to the village. On a high ground, under the Chinar the shady trees, sitting arrangements would be made in advance, by spreading woollen blankets, *gabbas* and *namdas*. The Naib would come on a horse, accompanied by a Muslim *sais* and the Pandit, Patwari and *Kardar*. He was received by the Nambardar of the village after the guard of honour presented by the village populace, in the shape of *Wunwon* or the ladies coral singing. He would then sit on the highest pedestal, relaxing against the pillows and diwans as a Mughal dandy. One by one, the applicants would bow before him and pray for mutation of land or any other matter. The peasants would keep presents like birds, rice, ghee, lamb hidden under their garments and by sign show it to the Naib, who would dispose off the cases one by one. In the evening, when he had to depart for his city home, some villagers would be selected by the Nambardar to

carry the presents to the Naib's home. When he reached his home, not only his legs would be messaged but his horse also? It was a common practice that a young Muslim Peasant lady would serve as a milkmaid for the babies of the Pandit Naib, so that sucking of milk from breasts of the Naib's wife would not affect her beauty. The baby of the milkmaid would cry for mother's milk in the stable. Her husband would serve as a servant entrusted with washing of kitchen utensils. But neither the maid nor the husband could enter the kitchen for fear of polluting it."

It was but natural that the Muslims would nourish hatred against officials of the Maharaja. Another class of the people whom the Muslims hated were the Rajput *jagirdars* planted by the Dogra Maharaja in various parts of the valley. All proprietary rights were held by these *jagirdars* and the tillers of land had no right on the land they tilled. They could be ejected at the sweet will of the *jagirdars*.

The *jagirdari* system is a prototype of western feudalism. The genesis of this system was that the Dogra Maharaja kept a group of aristocrats and henchmen around him, to help in running his depotic rule. These satellites obtained fiefs from the Maharaja and become overlords of the people living in those fiefs. They were granted *jagirs*, *muafis* and *mukarries*. The *jagirs* were granted in lieu of political services rendered to the ruler. The *muafis* were granted to the Brahmins for invoking blessings on the Maharaja. The *mukarraries* were the cash grants to the individuals made at the whim of the ruler. It need not be emphasised that the *jagirdari* system was based on the capitalistic system of exploitation simply invented by the Maharaja to perpetuate his autocratic rule.

Services

Prior to 1931, the Muslims in the valley had practically no share in the services. Some of them served as orderlies and junior clerks and hardly there was any gazetted officer. The following figures for the year 1930 would reveal the position:

Revenue :

Out of the total employees in the Ministry of Revenue, only 35 were Muslims as against 113 Hindu officials. While Revenue Minister, the two Governors and the Secretary was a Hindu, the Muslims served as orderlies.⁴

Finance :

In the Finance Department there were only 13 Muslim officials as against

188 Hindu officials. The Head of the Department was a Hindu and the other gazetted posts also went to the Hindus.⁵

Customs :

As against 150 Hindu officials there were only one Muslim official in the Custom Department. The Head of the Department as well as his deputies were non-Muslims.⁶

Judiciary :

There were only 4 Muslim officials in the Judicial Department as against 33 Hindu officials. The Chief Justice of the State was also a Hindu.⁷

Health :

Out of the total employees, 188 were Hindus and 32 Muslims. The Head of the Department was also a Hindu. The Muslims served as cooks and servants only.⁸

Education :

In the Education Department, there were only 6 Muslims officials as against 56 Hindu officials.⁹

Police :

The Police administration was mainly controlled by the Hindus at the highest as well as district level, the Muslims constituting only 662 ordinary constables.¹⁰

The statistics regarding the Gazetted services revealed that while there were 71 Hindu Gazetted officers, the number of the Muslims did not exceed¹¹ 4. It is evident that all the higher posts were held by the Hindus and the Pandit community was in a better position than the Muslims in the State.¹²

The State being ruled over by the Hindu Maharaja, the Hindus wielded extreme power both as administrators as well as landlords. They could easily obtain services under the Government and occupied higher posts.¹⁶

It was propagated that Muslims being educationally backward could not hold high posts. For nearly hundred years, the Dogras Maharajas did not take any initiative to provide facilities for education of the Muslim masses, rather, they made it a policy to discourage learning among them. For this purpose, no schools were opened in those farflung areas of the valley, where only the Muslims dominate. When the recommendations of Mr. Sharp on the question of providing educational facilities were put up before the Maharaja, he did not act but on the other hand kept the recommendations in the cold storage. Fifteen years, after an official enquiry committee had to admit that "no one

appears to be aware of the nature of the report submitted by the educational expert".¹⁴

The Kashmiris have had a glorious past. They had been scholars and their works had won appraisal outside India also. Their works of art, like shawls, papier machi etc. had won acclaim in Europe. They had defeated the Mughals several times. But due to the foreign subjugation and slavery, their high spirits got cooled down and weakened. Their industry was ruined and all facilities of education were denied to them. The Mughals, the Afghans and the Sikhs had enslaved them. When the Sikhs were wiped out, they suffered most at the hands of the Dogra Maharajas.

Before 1931, it was the shawl weaver, who openly clashed with the despotic power. Their leaders were drawn from the merchant class. There were at one time as many as 40,000 shawl looms in Kashmir valley and the Maharaja got a much more larger revenue than what could be obtained from the land. The shawl-weaver, and his trade, therefore, became the main source of exactions for the Maharaja. As the Franco-German War had given a set back to the shawl trade, it resulted in the upheaval of 1865 and on 29th April, 1865 they decided to march into a procession protesting against the high taxes.¹⁵ This upheaval was crushed by the Dogra army.

"One can tell that this is a sad people who have borne centuries with grief, who have learned to bend their heads to the storm and have grown twisted and crooked in the process; yet in whose hearts there survives a perception of the purpose of God, and an increasing desire to rise once more into the sunlight of noblemen".

The Story of Sufferings

The story of the sufferings of the Kashmiri Muslims is long. The first expression of their dissatisfaction was given in a memorial presented to the Viceroy when he came to Kashmir in 1924.

"In the course of the memorial the Muslims demanded that proprietary rights of the land should be given to the peasants; that an adequate number of Mohammedans should be employed in the State services; that steps should be taken to improve the conditions of Mohammedan education in the State; that the system of Begar should be abolished; that the work of the Co-operative Department should be extended and that all Muslim mosques in possession of the Government should be released and handed over to the Muslims".

Strange enough the Government reported that there was no substance in the memorial. Instead of looking into their grievances, the memorialists were exiled, fined and punished by the Maharaja and nothing tangible was done in pursuance of the memorial.

In 1926, the Kashmir Muslims Conference at Lahore took up the cause of the Kashmiris and approached the Maharaja for permission to submit a memorial. But this request was disallowed by Hari Singh on the plea that it was made by outside Muslims. The Maharaja was ill-advised by his Hindu councillors and he scumbled to it.

In January, 1927, the definition of a Hereditary State Subject was formulated.¹⁶ As the Muslims had not attained a high standard of education, their entry into the services was precluded and the Pandit minority usurped all the non-gazetted posts. While the Scholarships Selection Board was constituted, with no Muslim members on the Board, the idea of proper representation of different communities in the public service or for training abroad was not kept in mind with the result that only non-Muslims were selected for services or trainings. As an instance, when 12 scholarships were granted during the year 1927, only one was allotted to a Muslim and the rest went to the Hindus. There were highly qualified Muslim youngmen from the State available but the Maharaja's Government cared nothing for them. Both the Muslim Associations at Srinagar and Jammu made several representations to the Maharaja, on the subject, but no action was taken to remove injustices.

When in 1928, the Maharaja went to England, a Cabinet was formed to conduct the administration of the State, which had 99% Muslim population, no Muslim was selected as member of the Cabinet, by the Maharaja. In April, 1929, when a Minister of the Maharaja, drew the attention of the Government towards the deplorable conditions of the Muslims, either politically or economically, the Maharaja took no action on it. Even in 1929, an understanding was reached between the Government and the representatives of the Muslims that scholarships and services would be shared between the Muslims and Hindus on fifty-fifty basis. The Government instead of implementing its assurances, put hurdles in it by the constitution of a Recruitment Board and by laying strict conditions for selection of the candidates, with the result that no Muslim youngman could be appointed.

When Hari Singh again proceeded to England in 1930, another representation was made to the Maharaja's Cabinet, by the leaders of the Muslim Association Srinagar, in September of that year. After five months, an evasive reply was given to them ignoring their demands, with the result that the seeds of unrest and agitation began to sprout out.

The meeting of the All India Kashmir Muslim Conference was held on 26th of December, 1939, which passed many resolutions demanding redress of the Muslim grievances, but the Cabinet followed a policy of philosophic calm. Wattal and Kartar Singh, the two members of the Maharaja's Cabinet desired to crush the aspirations of the Muslims with a strong hand but wakefield, advocated restraint.¹⁷

The above are the circumstances which ultimately resulted in the 1931 revolt. But it is essential to summarise the grievances of Muslims.

Grievances

Many mosques, shrines, tombs and religious buildings of the Muslims were forcibly occupied in the Dogra regime and used as grain stores for the Dogra army and stables. Prominent among the buildings were Pather Masjid, Khanqah-i-Sokhta, Khanqah-i-Bulbul Shah, Khanqah-i-Darashikoh, Mosque of Mulla Shah, Idgah at Srinagar, Tomb of Madin Sahib, Pir Mahal known as Pari Mahal, the Tomb of Sultan Zain-ul-abidin's mother, Moghal Mosques at Jammu, Rajouri, Chingas and Poonch, Khanqah-i-Sofi Shah, Jammu, Malshahi Mosque, Ganderbal, Saris on the Moghal Road, Takhat-i-Sulaiman, Qila Nagar-nagar on Koh-i-Maran, mosques and shrines on Gopahill and around, and numerous places of the Muslim worship.

- (a) The Muslims were not permitted to call *Azan*, mostly in Jammu and in those places where Hindus predominate.
- (b) Converts or intending converts to Islam were harassed and their properties confiscated. There was no liberty to change religion and the apostate was debarred from all claim to his property and forfeited all rights to his ancestral property.
- (c) It was represented that the State laws should be so modified as to allow daughters of the peasants to inherit a share in agricultural lands also that the principle of primogeniture as regards succession to *jagirs* be abolished.
- (d) The Muslims demanded that insults to their religion be prevented by suitable legislation.
- (e) The Muslims were not given a fair chance in the matter of education and no action was taken on the recommendations made by Sharp, the Educational Commissioner with the Government of India, with regard to improvements required in this regard. His advice regarding establishment of Primary Schools in 1990 villages and 39 towns, exclusively inhabited by the Muslims was not considered. His another suggestion that *Mullas* be appointed as Teachers was not carried out. His another suggestion that instead of opening more schools in Jammu division, preference be given to the Kashmir division, was ignored. Further, the Muslim students were not given a fair chance to take up science in the schools and colleges. In 1931, only 18 Muslim students were allowed to take up science as against 127 Hindu students. In Jammu College, only 14 Muslims were given admission against 118 Hindu students.
- (f) The proportion of the Muslim teachers was very low as compared with the Hindu teachers. The net result was that the Hindu teachers gave encouragement to Hindu students in matters of enrolment. There were only 16 Muslims in the college and High Schools as against 146 Hindus.

- (g) In the Education Secretariat, which consisted of 12 officials from the Secretary downwards, there was not a single Muslim employees. Sharp's recommendations that Muslims be employed in the Education Secretariat were ignored.
- (h) While funds were provided by Maharaja for the propagation of Sanskrit alone, nothing was provided for Arabic or Persian.
- (i) In the matter of the State employments, the Muslims, who formed the great majority of the population were inadequately represented. Some of the most striking instances of 1931 are quoted as under :

Department	Muslims	Hindus
Press	5	66
Public works	3	194
Electric	3	47
Telegraph	7	73
Customs	14	195
Revenue	9	85
Finance	29	368
Judicial	21	162

As a matter of policy, the Muslims were only appointed as menials, while there were 47 menials in the Food Control Department, the number of the Hindus did not exceed 12. The Muslims were deliberately discouraged to obtain employment. There was a considerable number of unemployed Muslim graduates and post-graduates who knocked from office to office but were ignored.

"The schools and colleges in the State, it would appear, were run largely for the benefit of the Hindus and other non-Muslim communities. Such of the Muslims as managed to pass from these institutions were unable to get suitable jobs".¹⁸

1. The Kashmiri Muslims were totally debarred from joining military services in the State. The Dogra Maharajas behaved as conquerors of Kashmir and treated the people as a purchased community.¹⁹
2. While in the valley of Kashmir, which is populated by the Muslims, all lands were the property of the Maharaja, the case in Jammu was different. In case of his co-religionists, the Maharaja granted them proprietary rights in Jammu, while he considered Kashmir as his purchased commodity and himself to be the sole owner. For the first time in history, the Kashmiri Muslims were deprived of the proprietary rights over their ancestral lands. They were rendered land-less on their own lands. The Dogra Maharaja continued to bestow these lands as *jagirs* to the Rajputs, the Pandits and a few traitors of the Muslim community.

3. The Muslim peasants of the valley had to pay *kahcharai* or the grazing tax to the Maharaja. Similarly, the flocks maintained by the Gujjars, a class of nomad herdsmen, had to pay grazing taxes.
4. As the Dogra Maharajas considered to have paid Rupees 75 lakhs to the British as a price for Kashmir, they wished to obtain as much wealth as possible, out of land revenue and other cases. The agriculturists, who were mainly Muslims complained of such land taxes.
5. Trees in possession of the agriculturists in Kashmir were also taxed. They were not allowed to cut dried out or fallen trees. Even the shady trees, which result in hampering cultivation were not permitted to be cut. This produced resentment among the villagers.
6. Waste lands were allotted as *chaks* and *jagirs* to non-agriculturist Hindu officers and others by the Maharaja. These people made the Muslim peasants to make the lands suitable for cultivation through *begar* and other means. The agriculturists wanted that these *chaks* be resumed and given to them as they were the tillers of land. Similarly, there was wide spread resentment against the grant of *jagirs* to the Rajputs and Pandits by the Maharaja, as reward. These *chakdars*, *jagirdars* and other grantees made encroachments of lands held by the peasants and made undue exactions from them. They also held the rights on forests and mines within or around their *jagirs*. Some of them imposed *nazranas* in kind or cash on the poor peasantry.
7. Another complaint of the tillers of lands in the valley pertained to their forced ejection from agricultural lands, without provision of land elsewhere, so that they could earn their living in the manner to which they were accustomed.
8. As usury is prohibited among the Muslims, credits to the Muslims were advanced by the Pandit money lenders at very high rates of interest. They would also take an acknowledgement for double the amount advanced as loan. The net result was that nearly 50 percent of the Muslims population became pauper due to the unscrupulous methods adopted by the Pandit money lenders.
9. The whole administrative system was rampant with corrupt practices. Practically all the subordinate officials of the State Police, Forest, Revenue and the rest, lived free on bribes and gratifications. The victims were mostly the illiterate Muslim villagers.
10. *Begar* or forced labour in several ways was taken from the villagers for transport or the improvement of roads without any wages. Exception was made in case of Rajputs, Pandits, Brahmins, Sikhs and the Syeds but majority population of the Muslims suffered untold miseries.
11. As the State Government was not active in encouraging the establishment of new industries and enterprises in the valley, the people had

- no means of employment or earning. As such, the Muslim peasants, generally went to the plains during winter months to earn their living as coolies.
12. The Muslims also resented *Sutrashahi* or the marriage levy imposed on them during the Dogra rule.
 13. Strangely enough, the Muslims were debarred from slaughter of goat and sheep on the days of certain Hindu festivals and the number of such days amounted something like sixty in the course of a year. Even if such Hindu festivals occurred on the Muslim festivals like Id, the Muslims could not eat meat on their festive days.
 14. The petty traders of Srinagar complained of high octroi duties, the *Hanjis* or the boat man of boat tax and mooring site tax and lorry owners of road toll.
 15. While there was no restriction on any body to possess arms among the Rajputs, no one could have any arms in Kashmir. The Muslims of the valley could not have even long knives. The Kashmiri Muslims were also debarred to enter military force.
 "All the officers and soldiers either belong to the Dogra nation or from the Hindus, who have no sympathy with the Kashmiris. The soldiers treat the Kashmiris as dogs and beat them in such a way, just as some beat the beasts of burden."²⁰

A commentator remarked that the "life of a Kashmiri was no better than that of a Negro from Africa" and he has been suffering atrocities at the hands of alien masters since earlier times.²¹

Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah

The great grand-father of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah was a Pandit, who embraced Islam in 1766 at the hands of a Muslim divine name Mir Abdul Rashid.²²

His pedigree is given as under :

Sheikh Ghulam Rasool
 |
 Sheikh Mohammad Ibrahim
 |
 Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah

He belonged to the family of shawl makers and his father was a shawl designer.²³ Sheikh Mohammad Ibrahim passed away in November, 1905 and Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah was born 15 days after the death of his father on the 7th of December, 1905.

The Sheikh was brought up by his widowed mother and by his elder brother, Sheikh Mohammad Maqbool, who served as a Drawing Master in the

Amar Singh Technical Institute, Srinagar. From his childhood, he was diligent student and never wasted his time in useless pursuits.²⁴ At the age of five, he was put in a local *Maktab*, where he learnt Arabic as well as Quran-i-Sharief. He was put in the Islamia Primary School, Nowshera at the age of seven. After doing his fifth class, he joined the State High School, Fateh Kadal from where he passed his Matriculation Examination in 1922.²⁵

Sheikh Mohammad Maqbool, had an ambition to make his younger brother a Doctor. As such, he used the influence of his boss to obtain admission for him in a Science class.

With great difficulties he got an admission for F.Sc. in the S.P. College, Srinagar. After having passed his F.Sc. he applied to the State Government for deputation to some Medical College, outside the State as a State nominee. But his application was rejected and the seat was given to a Pandit student. Sheikh Abdullah felt sad and approached various officers and sought justice but in vain.²⁶ After it, he applied for admission into B.Sc. class in the Prince of Wales College, Jammu but all the seats had been filled up there except one, which was given to a son of an officer, who was not a state subject. He protested against this injustice but no one came to his rescue.²⁷ He was now convinced that there was no place for the son of a Muslim in the local College. As such, in 1924 he joined the B.Sc. class in the Islamia College, Lahore with the support of some Muslim philanthropists. His guardian, Sheikh Mohammad Maqbool was a poor Drawing Master.

Free Air of Lahore

"When I got a chance to breath in the free air of Lahore I began to compare the life of the Panjabees with the life of the Kashmiris. I felt ashamed at the pitiable condition under which the Kashmiris lived. Grief stricken, I asked myself : Have we Kashmiris any right to live as human beings? Is there any race more captive than us?"²⁸ Such were the feelings of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah as a student in Lahore. He would see many Kashmiri labourers in Lahore working as wood cutters, load carriers and coolies, He would sigh and weep.

"I was a Kashmiri and my countrymen were working as assess in the Panjab. My class fellows would occasionally leash insults and taunts on me, calling me Hatoo."²⁹

He could do nothing except to weep on the miserable condition of the Kashmiris. Insults pierced his heart and he felt that he was one among the enslaved Kashmiris. He began to feel home-sick and waited to run away to Kashmir from the Panjab. He began to take interest in politics with the result that he could not attend whole heartedly to his studies. As such, he failed to pass his B.Sc.³⁰ This was the first occasion, when he had failed and as such, Sheikh Abdullah felt very much grief stricken. His gaurdian also admonished

him to take care of his studies. He worked hard and did his B.Sc. in 1927. After doing his B.Sc., the Sheikh reached his home. At that time, the Government wanted to depute educated youngmen for training in various fields outside the country. Sheikh Abdullah applied for selection but no Muslim was selected for any training. The Sheikh represented against this injustice with the result that a few Muslim students were selected for training but he himself was denied this concession. He had wasted his one year in search of scholarship and now he decided to go for M.Sc. This would mean much expenses. As such, he went to Agha Syed Hussain, the Education Minister and requested for scholarship. The Minister explained his inability to help him. When the Sheikh asked him that as he represented the Muslims, he should safeguard their interests, the Minister said :

"I am a gramophone machine and the record, which they want to play, is placed on me and is played in the way, they like."³¹

Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah felt dejected. He joined the M.Sc. class at the Muslim University, Aligarh. Though he was now away from the miseries of Lahore, he did not feel any relief at Aligarh. As a Kashmiri he had to suffer insults. In agony he took a vow that either he would relieve his Kashmiri breathern from miseries or die as a victim of the enslaver.

"I have always cherished the hope to see Kashmir as a great country in the world, I hate communalism and I cannot bear the idea that one party or one nation, enslaves the other party or the other nation. I have full faith in justice and wish that justice be done to every one and he be given his due."³²

At that time Sir Albion Banerji who happened to be the Foreign and Political Minister under the Maharaja, resigned from his post and gave the following statement on 15th March, 1929 :

"Jammu and Kashmir State is labouring under many disadvantages. The majority community of the Muslim population is absolutely illiterate, labouring under poverty and living in villages under very low economic conditions. They are governed practically like dumb driven cattle.

"There is no touch between the Government and the people, no suitable opportunity for representing grievances and the administrative machinery itself requires overhauling from top to bottom, so that it is brought up to the modern conditions of efficiency, It has, at present little or no sympathy with the grievances and wishes of the people.

"The Pandits constitute the intelligentsia but it is also subdued in a way for they also are not allowed to get prominence in the services, nor are their energies utilised in other useful activities like factories or trade. The net result to this apathy is that they also feel disgruntled and constitute a

problem, which requires wise solution.

"There is hardly any public opinion in the State. The press is practically non-existent with the result that the Government is not benefited to the extent that it should be, by the impact of constructive criticism.

"The political status of the State is very important for India, for it lies on the boundaries where three empires meet. But it cannot progress nor utilise to its advantage its physical wealth, which has been bestowed on it by the nature. Nothing can be achieved until there is much cooperation between the Government and the subjects. It is necessary that the British Government also agrees to consider its right demands, and allows it freedom in its internal affairs, like other small states in Asia.

"The low economic condition of the people is responsible for all those evils, which exist here at present for which the Government had taken active measures for its eradication. But the Maharaja's Government cannot totally eradicate these evils until it tries to raise the economic life of the people".³³

Sheikh Abdullah read this statement in Aligarh and it produced much effect on his agitated mind. He gave his first political statement from Aligarh. In his statement, he deplored the attempts made by the Government to hide facts about the miserable life of the Kashmiris. He said that if the real condition of the people are brought to notice of the world, some useful result could be achieved.³⁴ His second statement, dealing with the pitiable condition of the Kashmiri Muslims was published in the "Muslim Outlook" Lahore.

After doing his M.Sc. in the second division, Sheikh Abdullah returned to his homeland in April 1930. His guardians wanted him to apply for a Government job. He applied for undergoing some training abroad but his application was rejected on the plea that he was overaged for a Government job. Dejected and ignored he sought a job in a private institution. He joined as an officiating teacher in the Islamia High School at a meagre pay.

Reading Room Party

In the year 1930, many Muslim youngmen had returned to Srinagar after having qualified themselves in postgraduate studies. All these youngmen were imbued with new ideas and they wanted to do something against the discrimination of the Government. They established a Reading Room at Fateh Kadal and elected Mr. Mohammad Rajab as President and Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah as its Secretary. Among the members, mention may be made of Qazi Saif-ud-din, Hakim Ali, Mufti Jalal-ud-din, Pirzada Ghulam Rasool, Pirzada Ahmad Shah, A. Fazili, Hakim Ghulam Murtaza and Moulvi Bashir Ahmad.³⁵ The Reading Room Party had the support of educated youngmen as well as some elderly sympathisers like Maulana Assad Subhani of Calcutta, who encouraged them.³⁶ For the first time donations amounting to Rs. 82 were

collected for this Reading Room. The members would meet occasionally and chalk out programmes for future action.³⁷ At that time, there was no newspaper in the valley and as such, they could not report about their activities. Thus, they resorted to send their articles and news items to the newspapers and magazines of Lahore. The papers, like the Muslim Outlook, the Siyasat, the Inqilab of Lahore and the Magazines, like the Indian Statesmen, London, published accounts of what was happening in Kashmir. Some of the writings demanded end of the Dogra Raj. The Government became un-nerved and banned the entry of the Muslim newspapers from Lahore. Then a new process was started and pamphlets published at Lahore, containing inflammatory matter, started coming into the valley of Kashmir. In these writings the Muslims were instigated to rise in the name of Islam, against the Dogra rule.³⁸ Most of these anonymous pamphlets were written in Urdu by Moulvi Abdullah Vakil.

In 1930, the Maharaja Hari Singh went to England to attend the Round Table Conference. An extract from his speech at the Conference needs to be quoted :

"Allied by treaty with the British Crown and within our territories as independent rulers, we have come with a full sense of responsibility to our State and all India. As the allies of British, we stand solidly by the British connection. As Indians and loyal to the land of our birth, we stand as solidly as the rest of our countrymen for our lands enjoyment of a position of honour and equality in the British Commonwealth".³⁹

This and the other statements created a furour in England. He declared himself as an Indian first and as an Indian last, much to the dislike of the Political Department.⁴⁰ Before he left for England, he had asked his Cabinet of Ministers to take as many Muslims in the public services as possible. It had been decided that about fifty percent of the vacancies shall be reserved for them. The State Government constituted the Civil Service Recruitment Board. As the Cabinet did not have a single Kashmiri Muslim member in it, there could be no desire of the administration to implement the aforesaid understanding. In fact, the rules framed by the Board for recruitment to Gazetted services, placed well planned restrictions on the entry of Muslims on the higher jobs. The competitive examination included Sanskrit as a language and Arabic was not included.⁴¹ It is evident that these rules were tactfully manipulated to exclude Muslims from entering civil services.

In order to express its resentment the members of the Reading Room prepared a memorandum and sent it to the Cabinet on the September, 1930. As soon as this memorandum spread in the city, the Muslim nobility like Munshi Assad Ullah Vakil, Khawaja Abdul Rahim Bandey, Mirza Ghulam Mustafa and Mufti Sharif-ud-din approached the State Cabinet and assured it that the Muslims were loyal to the Maharaja. They also pleaded strong measures against the signatories of the memorandum. But the Cabinet asked the Reading

Room Party to depute its representative to meet them. Sheikh Abdullah, Mr. Abdul Aziz Fazili and Mr. Mohammad Maqbool Pandit presented themselves before the Cabinet.⁴² For the first time, the Reading Room Party obtained recognition from the Government. It also proved that the Muslims had a case and their grievances had a substance. This event proved to be an unexpected turning point in the political history of the Jammu & Kashmir State. The other group of hawks pleaded for agitation against the Dogra raj but the opinion of the moderates prevailed.

The interview lasted for more than two hours. Sheikh Abdullah and his two colleagues pointed out that the Government wanted to put obstacles so as to debar the Muslim youngmen for getting their legitimate share of services. The Cabinet refused to modify the rules. The youngmen were sorely disappointed at the attitude of the Cabinet. They published all the issues in the pamphlet and got it published from Lahore. They also collected facts and figures about the number of the Muslim employees in various Government offices and got it published in the *Inqilab*, Lahore.⁴³

Muslim Association

Mr. Ghulam Ahmad Ashai, who had been ousted from service organised the Kashmir Muslim Association with the main aim to get the grievances of the Muslims redressed. It also aimed at safeguarding the rights of the Muslims. At Jammu, there was another organisation with the same objects and aims, headed by Qazi Gohar Rehman, Syed Gulzar Hussain, Mr. Allah Rakha Sagar, Mr. Ghulam Haider Ghorri and Molvi Haider Shah. Both these organisations came in contact with each other and it was decided that both should work together for the Muslims in the State.⁴⁴ In the subsequent elections, the Kashmir Youngmen Muslim Association elected Khawaja Ghulam Ahmad Ashai as its President and Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah as its Secretary. The members included were Hakim Ghulam Murtaza, Khawaja Ali Shah, Hakim Ali, Khawaja Mohammad Rajab, Pirzada Ghulam Rasool, Hakim Ghulam Safdar, Khawaja Ahmad Shah Fazili, Pirzada Ghulam Ahmad, Khawaja Ghulam Hassan Khan, Mr. Ghulam Ahmad Khan and Khawaja Ahsan Ullah.⁴⁵

It must be emphasised that all these youngmen were not thinking in terms of any revolution. They did not make any revolutionary demands nor they planned to overthrow the Dogra Maharaja. They either submitted their humble demands to the Maharaja or failing to get any redressal, represented their grievances in the newspapers. Partly due to backwardness of the people but mainly because of the distrust of the Muslim, the Dogra rulers manned the administrative services with outsiders, mostly the Panjabis. The State army was exclusively reserved for the Dogras and the Kashmiris were not allowed to be recruited in it.⁴⁶

Sheikh Abdullah as Teacher

Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah had started his career as a social worker and an agitator. He would every day come from Sowara to Srinagar and return late in the night. He wanted to hire a room at Srinagar but had no money. His elders were angry with him for they wanted him to obtain a Government job for himself. After all, he was an M.Sc. and it was very very high qualification for a Kashmiri in those days. As a school teacher in the Islamia School, his salary per month did not exceed thirty rupees. However, his activities as a member of the Reading Room Party did attract the attention of the Maharaja's Government and it was decided to keep him absorbed in a small job. He was appointed in a leave chance vacancy of Shamboo Nath Kaul as Second Master in the High School, Bagh-i-Dilawar Khan, Srinagar and he received his first monthly salary at Rs. 60 + Rs. 7 + Rs. 15 (Total Rs. 82). Late Pt. Shamboo Nath was promoted to the higher grade and Sheikh Abdullah was appointed as Second Master vide Government order No. 5090 dated 4.2.1931. He was asked to submit his State Subject Certificate to the Selection Board of the Jammu and Kashmir Government.

He accepted this job, simply to be at Srinagar the capital city of the State, so that he could continue his work in the Youngmen Muslim Association. He continued his political activities with the result that the Government transferred him to Muzafarabad. Little did he know that a spontaneous mass revolution un-known in the history of Kashmir would take place very soon and he would be forced to lead it. It was in July 1931, that the Kashmiris rose in rebellion against the Maharaja. It was an unprecedented, elemental up-heaval, almost revolution which shook the State and brought the Dogra Maharaja to a realisation of a stark reality.⁴⁷

It was in 1931, that the growing dis-satisfaction of the Kashmiri Muslims burst into flames. The revolution was led by no other person than Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah who had hitherto been unknown but had soon to play an important role in the political life of the valley.⁴⁸

Political movement in Kashmir started as a movement of the Muslims, because though being a majority, they were the main sufferers under the Dogra regime. Sheikh Abdullah and his colleagues, selected this very community, so that stagnation and inactivity of the general masses may come to an end. He placed before the Muslims their grievances and invoked them to start the struggle for freedom. Hence, the Muslims gave their blood to make this struggle a success. They faced sufferings, paid punitive fines and taxes, suffered canes, imprisonments and externments and other calamities, and received bullets, but did not lose courage but continued the freedom struggle.⁴⁹

In May and June, 1931, Sheikh Abdullah started a lecture campaign to secure human rights for the Kashmiris. As the down trodden people, the Muslims began to rally under his banner. He was joined by other leaders from

the middle class society. At that time, the meetings were held in the Jamia Mosque and Khanqah-i-Moulla, Srinagar. In his speeches, Sheikh Abdullah pleaded for equitable share in services for the Muslims, according to the population, freedom of speech, release of the sacred places, such as mosques, shrines and tombs of the Muslims, removal of restrictions on *Azan*, *Juma* prayer and such other religious ceremonies. All the Muslim divines, religious heads and some members of the upper class supported him and in one of the meetings Mir Waiz of Kashmir, Moulvi Yosuf Shah, while introducing him to public declared :

"Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah is our leader. His every utterance is my and my community's decision. I appeal to all the Muslims that they should act under his guidance and carry on his programmes."⁵⁰

Ignition

The whole atmosphere was filled up with inflammatory material and it only needed a small ignition to blow it up. Among the freedom fighters, there existed two groups but linked together. The majority consisted of moderates, who did hope to obtain some rights from the Maharaja. The other group, led by Mr. Ghulam Nabi Gilkar believed that the only remedy lay in ousting the Maharaja from the Kashmir soil. He maintained that the Muslims had been subjugated against their will and it was their birth-right to fight for the liquidation of the Dogra raj.⁵¹ Being religiously motivated, they wished to have a Muslim Sultan for the Muslim Kashmir. But the other group led by Sheikh Abdullah was a group of the reformists, who wanted to keep the Maharaja and force him, by democratic means, to grant rights of his subjects. In an article, entitled "What do we want", Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah says :

"We want to eliminate poverty, un-employment, and injustice from this land. We wish that none remains slave of another person and peace prevails in the country. We want to see the end of any trouble between various religious sects, so that a just order prevails in the state. It is our endeavour to see the Government of Maharaja Bahadur very strong so that it is able to face external dangers and intervention. The ruler and the ruler should live as a father and his sons. All should live as brothers. It is only possible when the down-trodden Muslims are allowed to reach the same status which has been attained by other fellow brothers, (Pandits) Dogras and Rajputs. We want continuance of Maharaja Bahadur's Government in the State."⁵²

However, the whole atmosphere in the State seemed charged with trouble and disturbance. The officers of the Maharaja had agreed upon a plan to tease the Muslims and then drown them with bullets. Any excuse could add fire to the fuel.

On 29th April, 1931, occurred what is known as the *Khutba* incident in Jammu, where during Id prayers. Khem Chand, a Hindu Police Officer prohibited the Imam, who was conducting Nimaz to stop the *Khutba* and thus disturbed the religious assembly of the Muslims. On the 4th of July, 1931, another incident followed, which is known as *Tohhin-i-Quran*. In the Police lines, Jammu, a Hindu Police Official Labha Ram, threw away the Holy Quran which a Muslim employee was reciting in his room. The reports of these incidents spread like lightning throughout Jammu and Kashmir and many protest meetings were held at several places. Mr. Ghulam Nabi Gilkar, who had much political foresight, instigated Sheikh Abdullah to deliver a speech against this sacrilege.⁵³

Protest Meetings

Mr. Gilkar and his group arranged a mass meeting of the Muslims in the Jamia Masjid, Srinagar. This was perhaps the first political meeting in which thousands of Muslims participated. When Sheikh Abdullah came to the dias and recited verses from the Holy Quran, people wept bitterly. He not only related the incident relating to the defilement of the Holy Book, but also asked the Muslims to struggle for their rights. A procession of the Muslims raised slogans : Allah-o-Akbar, Islam Zindabad, Sheikh Abdullah Zindabad. Now the Sheikh had emerged as the undisputed voice of the Kashmiri Muslims. He had made them conscious of maltreatment, slavery and sacrilege to Islam. During the course of his speech, his audience wept bitterly.

The authorities got perturbed and the Governor issued orders that no speeches be delivered in the mosques without his permission. Sheikh Abdullah declared :

"As this order amounted to wilful interference in our religion, we took to decision to defy such orders and never submit to any interference in our religious affairs. We announced another meeting in protest of the orders."⁵⁴

Resignation and Dismissal

The Government of the Maharaja got enraged with political activities of the Sheikh. In order to remove him from the scene he was transferred to Muzafarabad. He wrote to the authorities :

"I am no doubt a Government employee, but it does not mean that I should remain quite when my religion is defiled. I am, like other Muslims, not ready to tolerate any sacrilege of my religion. I will always protest against those officials, who are responsible for this defilement. I have not sold my conscience for the petty salary, which I get as a Government servant. It is my duty that I try to do something for the moral uplift,

social advancement and economic betterment of my countrymen and co-religionists".⁵⁵

The Education authorities did not care and as such, Sheikh Abdullah sent his resignation to them and plunged himself into the politics. The Government instead of accepting his resignation dismissed him from service in July 1932. This clearly revealed the animosity, which the Government had with Sheikh Abdullah.

He started addressing various gatherings of the Muslims in towns and villages of the valley. The authorities now planned to arrest him.

Mirza Bashir-ud-din Mehmood, the Head of Ahmediya Muslims issued the following statement :

"For the past many years, I have been studying the condition of the Muslims in Kashmir and have come to this conclusion that until they rise to offer sacrifices, nothing would be achieved for their betterment. The Kashmiris can make their country an industrial centre and thus remove traces of poverty. They can build factories in the valley and save themselves from economic ruin.

All of us, whether belonging to upper or lower starta, must join to tell the Government of the Maharaja that we are all one and united, that we all stand behind the Kashmiri Muslims and that we will, in no case tolerate any injustice to our Muslim brothers and sisters.

I feel that this is the opportune time for a struggle for freedom for the Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir State."⁵⁶

Moulana Abdul Qadeer Khan Gazi

In order to elect the representatives of the Muslims, the Youngmen's Muslim Association convened a public meeting on the 21st of June, 1931 at the Khanqah-i-Moulla. It was a unique meeting because all Muslims divines, irrespective of their schools of thought assembled at this sacred Khanqah. This meeting was addressed by Sheikh Abdullah, asking all Muslims to join and demand their rights. He also appealed to the Pandits to join hands with the Muslims for redress of grievances as well as, for independence. Mir Waiz Moulvi Yosuf Shah declared that they were one and they must join in the name of Islam and struggle for various rights of the Muslims. All the leaders swore in the name of the Holy Book that they would remain faithful to the cause of Islam.⁵⁷ Khawaja Saad-ud-din Shawl, Mir Waiz Moulvi Yosuf Shah, Mir Waiz Moulvi Hamdani, Chowdhary Ghulam Abbas, Agha Syed Hussain Shah Jalali, Khawaja Ghulam Ahmad Ashai, Munshi Shahab-ud-din, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and Sardar Gohar Rehman were elected as representatives of the Muslims. Just when the meeting was to be concluded Moulvi Abdul Qadeer Khan Ghazi came to the platform and delivered an inflammatory speech,

which was considered by the State Government to be seditious.⁵⁸ Excerpts of this speech are as under :—

"The honour respect and reverence of the Holy Quran is more dear to the Muslims than the rulership of the world. They will never tolerate any interference in their religion or defilement of their Holy Book".⁵⁹

"The Government of the Maharaja does not care for his subjects. It has no touch with the people, nor any sympathy for the downtrodden. Oh, Muslims arise ! Time is near when you shall reply with stones, against the bricks. I warn you that your representatives and memorials cannot come to your rescue, nor will these papers remove injustice and misery. Such things cannot solve the issue relating to the defilement of the Holy Quran".⁶⁰

"You must stand on your legs and fight against autocratic force.⁶¹ Even, if, you have no arms continue your fight with sticks and stones".⁶²

Moulana Abdul Kadir Ghazi, then pointed towards the Shergarhi Palace of the Maharaja and cried :

"Demolish this edifice of injustice, cruelty and subjugation".

To the Government this speech was highly seditious and of communal nature and the speaker had quoted from the Holy Quran, in support of his inflammatory statements.⁶³

It may be mentioned that Maulana Abdul Qadeer Gazi belonged to a Pathan family of Rampur connected with the Pan-Islamic Movement of Maulana Jamal-ud-din Astarabadi. His disguised visit as a servant of a British tourist, after the secret visit of Maulana Astarabadi is significant. Before the delivery of the inflammatory speech, he had established his contacts with the political thinkers at the shop of Pir Abdul Ahad Shah.

It is common knowledge that Maulana Jamal-ud-din Astarabadi alias Afghani is foremost among the Muslim philosophers of the 20th century who have influenced political thought of the Islamic countries. Maulana Afghani did come to Kashmir before his departure to Russia. He was the founder of the Pan-Islamic Movement. Maulana Abdul Qadeer Ghazi was a prominent worker of this movement. "He could speak English, Urdu, Persian and Arabic. Having lived in Peshawar and Rawalpindi, he could speak Panjabee and Pashtoo also. Of wheatish colour, sharp eyes, big face with curved moustaches, he had a big head, bulky body and thunderous voice and all these features made him a grand personality. He might be 36 to 40 years in age and was a soldier by nature".⁶³

Trial

Maulana Abdul Qadeer Ghazi was arrested on the 25th of June, 1931 and

under the sanction of the Maharaja, a complaint was made against him in the court of the Session Judge on the 4th of July, 1931. Under orders of the Maharaja, offences under Section 124-A and 153 of the Indian Penal Code are made triable directly by the Court of Sessions and that is why the complaint was made in that Court and not before a Magistrate. During four hearings in the Court of Sessions on the 6th, 7th and 9th it was found that the trial had greatly excited the Muslims and large crowds of the Muslims assembled in the Court and compound also. The Magistrate District was apprehensive of a breach of the peace. On 11th July, 1931, the District Magistrate, therefore, suggested that the trial should be held in jail and permission was granted.⁶⁴

The case was the first political case in the State and as such attracted much attention of the people. The Muslims were sympathetic with Maulana Abdul Qadeer Ghazi and thousands of people would assemble in the Court to know as to what would be done to the prisoner. They would obstruct the way to the Court and it was quite evident that a clash would occur between the Police and the Muslims. There was imminent danger of turmoil.⁶⁵ Moulvi Abdullah Vakil opted to work as the defence counsel in this case.⁶⁶

Maharaja's Appeal

Maharaja Hari Singh got perturbed at the turn of events and on 9th July, 1931 issued the following appeal to the people :

"From the immemorial all communities within the State have been living on terms of closet harmony and friendship with each other and I used to take the greatest pride in the fact that we were happily free from all communal strife. I am, therefore, greatly pained to see that quite recently, owing to external influences a changed and regrettable attitude is observable in certain sections in the cities of Jammu and Srinagar. This is greatly to be deplored. Two unfortunate incidents which occurred recently in Jammu city and which could not by any stretch of imagination be associated with any action or policy of my Government and for which the responsibility rested solely on the persons involved, have been seized upon and widely misrepresented, inside and outside the State, so as to convey to those who are not in a position to know the true facts, that the policy of my Government is such that Islam is in danger.

"At the beginning of my rule, I announced to you my people, that my religion is justice. That announcement has guided all my public acts and policies and I shall always adhere to it. I have not made, and will not permit, any discrimination against any class of my people on the grounds of religion.

"I have no desire whatever to suppress the legitimate requests and voice of my people, whether expressed in writing or in speech. It is my intention to give effect to these views, but I am unable to do so long as communal

tension exists, for fear of aggravating it. Consequently, the first essential is that the leaders of the various communities should take immediate action to put a stop to all political activities tending to prevent the re-establishment of friendly relations between them.

"In regard to recruitment for the State services prior consideration is and shall always be given to the public interest and the obligation of maintaining the efficiency of the administration at the highest possible level can never be overlooked.

"I cannot allow my Government to be coerced by threat into unjust action and it is my duty to protect the law-abiding sections of my people from encroachments on their lawful rights. The immediate burden of maintaining law and order necessarily falls on the Magistracy and the Police whose duty it will be to see that the law is upheld at all costs, and where the law is defied, its authority will be restored.

"As regards people outside the State, whether Hindus or Mohammadans, I ask them not to interfere in any way in matters concerning British India and British Indians. The whole basis of political action is impaired if one political unit interferes in the domestic concerns of another".

This appeal of the Maharaja was rejected by the Muslims in a mammoth meeting held in the Jamia Masjid on the 10th of July, 1931. Sheikh Abdullah said :

"Maulana Abdul Qadeer Khan Ghazi was being prosecuted for the cause of Islam and for the Muslim masses. We all should pray for his acquittal. We must show our complete solidarity with him".

In another speech, he said :

"Be prepared to be sacrificed for the sake of Islam. Be prepared to be sacrificed for the sake of helpless prisoner, Abdul Qadeer Khan. Raise subscriptions for his defence".

13th July, 1931

On the day, the trial of Maulana Abdul Qadeer Ghazi was to be held in the Srinagar Jail premises, all the extra preparations had been made by the authorities. The Deputy Inspector of Police came to the sight with a Police force of 44 Policemen, 5 Head Constables, 2 Sub-Inspectors and one Inspector. Besides this the Jail forces consisted of 19 men "with 25 rifles, which are muzzle loaders, very old; they cannot fire and are worse than lathis."⁶⁷

The 22 Policemen were armed with rifles and the rest had clubs. In all 22 armed Policemen 119 Policemen with dandas, 5 Head Constables, 2 Inspectors and one Sub-Inspector were within the control of the Deputy Inspector General of Police. All the Inspectors had revolvers.⁶⁸

The description of the site had been given as under :

"The Jail has a compound with high walls. There is a wooden gate at the Jail to enter the compound. On the other side of the Jail to the south of the compound, there is walled ground, which also had a door more or less opposite, though not exactly opposite to the wooden gate of the Jail. At the south west corner of the Jail there are Police Lines for the use of the Jail Police. There is an iron gate to the Jail building. This gate is about 50 yards from the wooden gate and a path leads directly from the wooden gate to the iron gate".⁶⁹

Before the arrival of the Session Judge, a large mob of the Muslims had gathered on the road leading to the Jail compound. When the Judge came by car the mob shouted :⁷⁰

"Abdul Qadeer !
 "Our brother from Raibareli !
 "Release Abdul Qadeer !
 "Our brother of Rawalpindi !
 "We will go to jail !
 "Imprison us instead !

The Jailor told the Judge that the people wanted to have a *deedar* (a look at the face) of the Ghazi.⁷¹

The people had waited from morning upto 2 P.M. but the Judge had not started his work nor the prisoner was brought out of the Jail. The people got excited and gave slogans. The Sessions Judge wanted the mob to disperse but they requested permission to offer prayers. One amongst them, Khawaja Abdul Khaliq Shora recited *Azan* or the call to the prayers. During this time the Police caught hold of 5 persons and arrested them. At the time of arrests, they shouted "why are these men arrested". At that very movement firing started. Khawaja Abdul Khaliq Shora was the first man to die. He was standing, when he was hit by a Police man.⁷² The people gave slogans of *Allah-o-Akbar* and started pelting. Before the firing, the Governor was in touch with the Maharaja through telephone :

"Before the firing I sent information to the Palace where His Highness was in residence, Captain Faqir Singh A.D.C. came to the phone and I informed him. After the mob was pushed away from Jail Police Lines, I again phoned the situation to the Palace. The second time I phoned to the Palace, the State Secretary Thakar Kartar Singh Ji spoke to me on phone".⁷³

The above would clearly reveal that all this show of arms was pre-arranged and the Maharaja and his Dogra advisors wanted to teach a lesson to the

Muslims by shooting them. They felt that they could create awe and terror in the minds of the Kashmiris but later events proved to the contrary.

"Two ranks of ten each remained on firing duty. I conveyed the order to the Sub-Inspector and two rounds were fired by ten men in the air.

"The mob continued to throw stones as before. Two rounds were fired by one rank.

"The firing had no effect on the mob which continued to throw stones. The District Magistrate ordered the firing to two rounds by one rank.

"About a minute and half or two minutes later they advanced with much fury. Buck shot was fired.

"The crowd entered four or five paces inside the compound and continued to throw stones. The District Magistrate then ordered that three more rounds should be fired by both ranks but below the waist.

"Again the firing by both ranks of three rounds was ordered. After this the crowd dispersed.

"When attacked, the mob receded and went inside two lanes opposite the Police Lines. They turned back raising slogans : "*Allah-O-Akbar*" and "*Islam Zindabad*".

"Out of the crowd, we caught two and three at a time and as we caught, the crowd receded again and then faced us. In this way, we arrested 27 men.

"At this time, the cavalry and military had arrived.

"It is reported that a person died the same day. According to one report the number of wounded persons is 64 and according to another report the number is so large as 96. Out of the wounded persons 15 have been arrested".⁷⁴

The first Kashmiri to receive the bullet was Khawaja Abdul Khaliq Shora and the first agitator to be arrested on the 13th of July, 1931 at the Central Jail was Khawaja Mohammad Yahya Rafiqi.⁷⁵

The people then entered the Jail office, picked up *charpoys* for carrying of the martyrs and the wounded. Those who breathed were taken to the Mission Hospital for treatment. Some of the wounded died in the Hospital. While the dead were being carried towards the Jamia Masjid, the cavalry attacked them. They wanted to snatch away the dead bodies, but the people confronted them bravely and proceeded further. Two wounded persons died at the shop of Dr. Abdul Wahid. The processionists reached Maharajganj market and collected themselves at the Police Post. An eye witness has to relate the following story—

"No shop inside Maharajganj Chowk was looted. Two wounded persons were carried to the shop of Dr. Abdul Wahid for treatment. In the meanwhile, the mob had collected below the Police out-post. Stones were

thrown at me and I came back. Then I and 10 or 12 other shopkeepers, all Hindus, went out armed with lathis and went in the same direction. I was hit with stones. Then I came back to my shop. After 10 or 15 minutes the mob came but my shop was not looted".⁷⁶

In the city some 20 to 30 shops looted in the first instance by the Muslims and then by the Hindus aided by the Military.⁷⁷

Mr. Wakefield, the Foreign Minister of the State reached the place of incidence at 3 p.m. He saw a few dozen Muslims with two wounded men, who complained.

"We were saying our prayers and without any cause, we were fired at".⁷⁸

Firing in City

The Military took over the city and started indiscriminate firings. At Nawabazar 3 persons were killed or wounded without any cause. There was no provocation the part of the crowd.⁷⁹ The Military also looted houses of the well-to-do Muslims in the city. At the same time whose houses were looted, were arrested and there remained no body to make any complaint to any body.⁸⁰

The people took these martyrs in a procession towards the Jamia Masjid. All corpses were laid in the compound of the Mosque and Sheikh Abdullah, Mir Waiz Mohd. Yosuf and other started delivering speeches against the Maharaja. This was an organised beginning of the struggle against the Dogra Maharaja which was wholly and solely led by the Muslims, but the Hindus took the side of the Maharaja. At the suggestion of Khawaja Noor Shah, all the martyrs were buried in the Ziarat Naquishbandiya, Khanyar. The following is the list of martyrs, according to the Government sources :⁸¹

1. Abdul Khaliq Shora.
2. Mohammad Akhbar Dar.
3. Ghulam Ahmad Rather.
4. Mohamad Usman Misgar.
5. Ghulam Ahmad Butt.
6. Ghulam Mohammad Halwai.
7. Ghulam Nabi Kalwal.
8. Ghulam Ahmad Naqash.
9. Ghulam Rasool Dura.
10. Amir-ud-din Makai.
11. Mohammad Shaban Makai.

Besides the above, the following also died subsequently due to bullet wounds :

12. Ghulam Qadir Khan.
13. Mohammad Ramzan Choola.
14. Ghulam Mohammad Sofi.

15. Nasir-ud-din.
16. Amir-ud-din Jandaguro.
17. Mohammad Subhan Khan.
18. Mohammad Sultan Khan.
19. Abdul Salam.
20. Ghulam Mohammad Teli.
21. Faqir Ali.
22. Ghulam Ahmad Dar.

Here is a list of other martyrs who died of Police firings :

1. Mughli.
2. Mohammad Abdullah Ahangar.
3. Jana Begam.
4. Ghulam Rasool Bakro.
5. Mohammad Abdullah Najar.
6. Assad Ullah Gilkar.

Before the Enquiry Commission, the Police authorities admitted that they had used 180 rounds of ammunition and had arrested 32 persons in this connection. For the first time in centuries, the Kashmiris sought to throw off the old yoke of oppression. They were owed down by the bullets of the Dogra troop in their uprising but refused to turn back and received these bullets on their bare chests.⁸²

For two hours, the city of Srinagar remained without any authority and law and order situation was in the hands of none, when the city was handed over to the Military. The soldiers arrested each and every person, whom they found outside his house. All Government offices, Police Stations and other Government buildings were filled up with prisoners, all of whom were Muslims. The Military participated in looting of Muslim shops in the Maharaj Gunj trade centre.⁸³

Leaders Arrested

Next day, all the leaders of the Muslims, such as Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, Chowdhari Ghulam Abbas, Moulvi Abdul Rahim, Sardar Gohar Rehman and Khawaja Ghulam Nabi Gilkar were arrested. Sheikh Sahib was locked up in a solitary cell of the Hari Parbat fort in Srinagar. As a protest, the whole valley of Kashmir observed hartal for 19 days. The masses engulfed itself in the agitation. For the first time, they had arisen from deep slumber and now, none could stop them from their onward march to freedom. From house-tops, the raised slogans and recited revolutionary slogans. All the martyrs, which the people had recovered from the Military were buried in the Ziarat of Naqashband Sahib. At many places, the Police had to fire in order to disperse the gathering. The Military used fire in Maisuma Zainakadal, Habba Kadal, Nawa Kadal and Jamia Masjid and killed many persons. The capital city of

Srinagar remained under curfew for 21 days and the city became the city of dead. The agitators and freedom fighters started a poster campaign, giving details about the atrocities committed by the Military and the Police. The news of this Agitation had now started reverberating in the British India. The Maharaja got alarmed and set free Sheikh Abdullah and other leaders after 3 week's imprisonment.

Political Analysis

In a State where Muslims were in a majority and the ruler being a Hindu, it was but natural that any social or political movement would be spear-headed by Muslims. However, this fact should be borne in mind that the Muslims had other reasons for this agitation, and these reasons were basically economic. The Muslim peasantry had suffered due to the loss of ownership of their lands. The shawl workers had suffered due to high taxation as well sale of rice at higher rates. The educated class among the Muslims suffered because all avenues of service were monopolised by the Kashmiri Pandits and Jammu Dogras. Hence, Muslims and Hindus stood facing each other with divergent loyalties. However, it cannot be ignored that the Muslims of Kashmir were a religiously persecuted community and the main cause of the agitation should have been religion.

For the first time, the Muslims of Kashmir arose after centuries of sleep. All of them, young and old, urban and rural, with one voice cried :

"The Quran is put to sacrilege; is it justice?
The Khutba is stopped; is it justice?
The questioner and the crier is put in the Gujpath fort!
All are put to destruction; is it justice?
Salt has been put upon our wounds, our blood is boiling!
Mr. Abdullah has been arrested, is it justice?
We have been fried like fish, we have been put to grief!
We have been fired upon; is it justice."⁸⁴

It appeared that after centuries, the Kashmiris got equipped with a tongue to speak about their feelings and hopes. It was this incident which made Sheikh Abdullah as *Sher-i-Kashmir*, or the Lion of Kashmir. Thus sang the poets :

A youngman, known as Sher-i-Kashmir has appeared;
He demands freedom of speech.
He begs for our deliverance at the shrine of Amir-i-Kabir.
He demands freedom of press and assembly.
He has no arms and ammunition !
He has faith in Allah !
All this change is due to our Mian Sher-i-Kashmir.⁸⁵

This major event in the political history of Kashmir provoked conflicting trends and loyalties. While the Hindus stood behind the Maharaja and exerted him to crush the rebellion, the Muslims termed it as a religious war against the Hindu Maharaja. To the majority of the Hindus, this agitation was a communal

agitation but they ignored the fact that the Muslims in the Jammu and Kashmir State, had suffered untold miseries and atrocities during the Dogra rule. They had some faith in Hari Singh for he appeared to them as a democratic ruler but with the advent of 1931 calamity, they lost all hope in him. Henceforth they raised such slogans against him :

"Harisinghun bael, Khudayan gool".
Let the progeny of Hari Singh perish.

Such slogans were bound to antagonise the non-Muslims. While the Muslim press came forward with stories of strecities, the Hindu press took the side of the Maharaja. Two important papers from Lahore wrote :

"The rebels should be given exemplary punishments, so that others get a lesson from it. The Government has shown magnanimity in arresting only 200 Muslims out of 7000 invaders. What was needed was to arrest all the seven thousand and try them for treason."⁸⁶

"What is needed is that the Government should crush the agitation with a strong hand."⁸⁷

The above two excerpts from the Hindu press would show the trend of their writings. At this juncture, the Ahmedi Muslims organised relief camps and committees, throughout India, for collection of aid for victims and also for dispensation of correct information about the plight of Muslims in Kashmir. In his telegram to the Viceroy, the Head of the Ahmediya Muslims, Qadian wrote as under :

"I appeal to your excellency that you save millions of Kashmiri Muslims from atrocities, for they have been sold into slavery by the British Government for a few coins."⁸⁸

Initially the movement was launched for restoring human rights of one particular community but soon it became a national movement. A time came when non-Muslims also saw in this struggle, a hope for their emancipation and some progressive elements among them appreciated the stand of Muslims in the State.⁸⁹

Whereas the Muslims of the State received support and guidance from the Muslim leaders of Panjab and the British India, the Maharaja deputed his emissaries to Lahore and other town to purchase sympathy. He succeeded in obtaining support from influential Muslim leaders. At the same time, some Muslim lawyers and judges of Panjab who were given promises of service in the State took the side of the Maharaja. Some worked to wreck the unity of Muslims and some came to Kashmir for offering mediation between Hari Singh and his subjects. The Maharaja succeeded in purchasing some Mullas and Moulvis to divide the Muslims of the State by sectarian propaganda. At a critical juncture when the Viceroy of India had agreed to take over Kashmir under direct administration as a part of the British India, the Kashmiri leaders got

themselves deceived by allurements from Muslim leaders from outside the State. They had no political experience or diplomatic skill, and as such, failed to understand the tricks of the game, losing golden opportunity to end the Dogra Maharaja's rule in 1931.⁹⁰

Dalal Committee

On the 14th July, 1931, the Maharaja appointed a Committee of Enquiry consisting of Mr. Justice Barjor Dalal, Mr. Justice B.R. Sawhny, Mr. Justice Abdul Qayoom and two non-official members to enquire into the causes of the disturbances in the city. But the Muslims objected to the composition of the Committee and decided to boycott it. Hence the Maharaja dissolved the Committee and instead ordered holding of an official enquiry by the Chief Justice and the other two Judges of the High Court. It started its work on the 27th of July, and completed its work by the 24th September, 1931. In all 112 witnesses were examined, out of which 74 were the Government officials and only 19 witnesses came forward from the Muslims, but none from the Muslim representatives. The Committee as it was constituted did not consider the grievances of the Muslims but only suggested certain measures so that the administration would be tightened up. Here is a summary of the suggestions :

1. "The most important desideratum is that preachings to excite communal hatred in the garb of religious discourse should be stopped with a strong hand.
2. "There should be more publicity given to the acts of Government. Acts done with the laudable object of appeasing the public mind, either of Mohammadans or Hindus should be known to the public and not kept secret.
3. "The Education Minister must personally interest himself in the matter of Mohammadan education.
4. "The question of employment of Mohammadans in the public services in large number will have to be faced by the Government.
5. "Definite instructions may be issued to the Civil Service Recruitment Board to aim at employment of a particular specified proportion of Mohammadan State Subjects of whatever class so far as they are available.
6. "One great necessity to procure communal accord is the appointment of a permanent Board consisting of an equal number of Hindu and Mohammadan members.⁹¹

It is quite clear that the Dalal Committee of enquiry did not go into the depth of the issues and made vague suggestions to the Government.

The State Government failed in their efforts to curb the upsurge and as such decided to make changes in the personnel of the administration. Pandit Hari Krishen Koul was appointed as the new Prime Minister of the State in July, 1931. At his instance the Maharaja issued orders regarding the release of

all prisoners except Abdul Qadeer Ghazi, who was given 5 years rigorous imprisonment. This compromise was effected through the efforts of Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad.

The compromise contained the following terms :

- (a) "The present agitation will be stopped immediately. No such speeches would be delivered at mosques, or places of worship or public meetings, which excite feeling of hatred against the Government or the member of any community.
- (b) "It would be announced in the Jamia Masjid and other mosques that the Muslims in the valley do not get inspiration from outside influence and they are steadfast in their loyalty to the Maharaja, from whom they expect sympathetic consideration of their genuine demands.
- (c) An appeal would be made to those who support the Muslim case, that until decisions are not taken on their demands nothing will be done by them which results in disturbing the peaceful atmosphere, so urgently needed for the consideration of the demands.
- (d) "This compromise will not effect the existing laws.
- (e) "We are indebted to the Prime Minister for his magnanimity in giving a patient hearing to our submissions and are thankful to him for his kindness.
- (f) "As soon as the announcement regarding stoppage of agitation will be done in all the towns and villages, the concerned officer will suspend all those orders which were passed to suppress the agitation, during the last two months.
- (g) "The High Court will be requested to set free on bail all those persons, who were arrested for rioting at the Central Jail. Those cases which are pending before the Courts will be kept in abeyance till the issue of the Report of Enquiry by the Dalal Committee.
- (h) "The dismissal or suspension cases of all those Government servants, who have taken part in the agitation will be reconsidered and those who guarantee that they will not take part in the agitation, will be reinstated.

At a public meeting in Jamia Masjid, the Muslims cursed both Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and Mir Waiz, Moulvi Yosuf Shah for their compromise with the Government. But, both of them explained to the public that they will not serve as traitors and will shed their blood in case, the Government will not fulfil their promise regarding removal of their grievances within a month. Both swore in the name of Holy Quran.

The representatives of the Muslims were to meet the Maharaja on the 9th August, 1931. But on the 6th of August, the Prime Minister told the representatives that he would convey the feelings of the deputation to the Maharaja, Sheikh Sahib told Hari Krishen Koul they are prepared to discuss

the issues with the Maharaja and not with his Prime Minister. On this Hari Krishen Koul got enraged and pointing towards Sheikh Sahib, said :

"The Government has positive proof that you are delivering sedicious speeches against the administration. You also do not allow our C.I.D. man to enter the Jamia Masjid. If you people do not change your foolish attitude, then your mosques will be sealed".

On hearing this, Sheikh Sahib retorted that even the Bolshivik Government has not imposed restrictions on the mosques :

"You want to frighten us with such warnings. Your threats amount to interference in our religious affairs and would mean adding fuel to the fire. Do you not believe that you are playing with fire. You shall have to change your invading attitude. Your appointment as Prime Minister mean another stab on the Muslims and your unsympathetic attitude towards the Muslims is a Himalayan blunder."

After this, the Muslims representatives returned back, without an interview with the Maharaja. It was evident that the State Government had succeeded in winning time needed control the agitation.

After the event, protest meetings were held in the Jamia Masjid, in which Sheikh Sahib openly spoke about the revengeful attitude of the Government. The Muslims observed a hartal on the 14th August, 1931 and a big meeting was held at the Jamia Masjid, Srinagar on Friday, which was attended to by 2 lakh Muslims from different parts of the valley. Sheikh Sahib gave an account of the atrocities committed by the Government of the Maharaja.⁹² He delivered another speech on the 28th August, 1931 in which he said :

"I have the Holy Quran in my hand and I am standing before you in the house of God. As such, whatever I will say will be based on truth. I have in this very mosque made the promise with you that I will serve you till my death. You have also very kindly nominated me as your representative. I stand by the promise I made with you and you should also stand by your promise. I again declare on oath that Until I live I will serve my nation faithfully and will even be prepared to sacrifice my life for the community.

"We will make the Government to accept our all demands. They have asked for 2 months time to fulfil their promise. If they deceive us, then we will not sit at rest, nor will we allow the Government to sit at rest. We will make so many sacrifices for our nation, that the Kashmir Government, as well as the Indian Government and the whole world will be amazed.

"The people from the Panjab and India will come to die here. The whole Islamic world is watching our moves.

"Extend the graveyard of the martyrs."⁹³

Second Meeting

Sheikh Sahib started attending various mass meetings throughout the valley. The Prime Minister got perturbed and decided to warn the leaders. He invited Sheikh Sahib and Mir Waiz to his house on the 21st September, 1931. As soon as the Muslim leaders entered the room of Pandit Hari Krishen Koul, he said to the Sheikh Sahib :

"You are mischievous and not ready to abstain from mischief".

Sheikh Sahib told him to use parliamentary language, "Such insulting words will not be tolerated by me or by my nation".

The Prime Minister said :

"You are talking nonsense I went to teach a lesson to you and your nation". On this Sheikh Sahib got enraged and said :

"You want to teach a lesson to my nation. I warn you that your attitude will result in undermining the Government, which has inflicted untold miseries on us.

"I will advise you to look into the grievances of the Muslims. I want that good relations between the ruler and ruled be established and peace should return to this land as before but you try simply tease us to make us suffer".

Hari Krishen Koul in a fit of rage cried and asked the Governor to arrest Sheikh Sahib and his colleagues at once. Upon this Sheikh Sahib retorted :

"I am not afraid of being imprisoned and so are my many thousand colleagues. I declare that you and your brother Daya Krishen Koul are not loyal to the State. Any how want to test the courage of the Muslims. Until a Kashmiri Muslim is alive he will shed the last drop of his blood for his rights.

"You must remember that truth will prevail against untruth. Do not be under this impression that a few Congressite Muslims are at your back and you hold influence in the official circles of the Government of India. God is with us and he will come to our rescue".⁹⁴

Sheikh Sahib was arrested at the residence of the Prime Minister. During 24 hours most of the Muslims representatives were arrested.

The arrest of Sheikh Sahib resulted in wide-spread resentment.

The All India Kashmir Committee

After centuries of slavery, slumber and suppression, the Kashmiris had arisen against tyranny, oppression and autocracy. They had awakened and brought about a revolution in the valley. They had faced the Dogra army and received bullets and died for freedom. All these events produced resentment among the Muslims living in India and abroad. On the 24th of July, a meeting of the prominent Muslim leaders was held at Simla, which was attended to

among others by Sheikh Mohammad Iqbal, Moulana Shawkat Ali, Moulana Abu-ul-Kalam Azad, and Dr. Ansari.⁹⁵ A Committee to be known as the All India Kashmir Committee was founded with the aim of providing all material help and aid to the people of Kashmir in their freedom struggle. It also decided to provide all support and help to the Kashmiris in achieving their goal. It also agreed to gear up its propaganda machinery to make known the miserable conditions of the Kashmir throughout the world and ask for moral as well as financial support for their cause. The Committee agreed to nominate Mirza Mian Bashir-u-din Mahood Ahmad, the Head of the Ahemidiya Movement, Qadian as its President and Moulana Abdul Rahim Darad as its Secretary. The first work the Committee did was, to tell the British that the freedom struggle in the State was not aimed against the British rule but against the autocratic rule of the Dogra Maharaja. It succeeded in replying the influence created in the minds of the Viceroy that the movement was against the British and it succeeded in making the Viceroy to agree to ask the Maharaja to redress the grievances of the Kashmiri people.⁹⁶ The Committee decided to observe the 'Kashmir Day' in India and abroad and hold public meetings in favour of the Kashmiris. Such meetings were held in all the important towns of the country. The Committee provided financial and legal aid to the sufferers and the imprisoned.

Kashmir Day

It was decided to hold the Kashmir Day on the 15th August, 1931 at Jamia Masjid, Srinagar. The State Government did every thing to frustrate holding of this meeting but it did not succeed. The Kashmiri Pandits spread the false rumour that it had been decided by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah to loot them. For the purpose they approached Hari Krishen Koul, the Prime Minister. At 10 A.M. thousands of Kashmiri men and women assembled in the Jamia Masjid, Srinagar. The speakers, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, Chowdhari Ghulam Abbas, Mistri Yaqub Ali, Moulvi Abdul Rahim delivered speeches, enumerating sufferings of the people. The blood stained clothes of the martyrs were shown to the people. The following resolutions were passed :

- (a) "On this historic day in honour of the Martyrs of 13th July, this huge gathering of Muslims looks with contempt and hatred the bloody and sorrowful events of the 13th July, which were the result of the cruel, animal like and cowardly acts of the local Hindu officials who ordered un-called for firing on the unarmed and peaceful people, who had assembled outside the Jail on that day, a big part whereof was offering prayers. This assembly respectfully demands of the Maharaja that in order to heal up the wounded hearts of the Muslims, the animal like officers responsible for the tragedy be removed from service.
- (b) "This huge gathering of the Muslims express its resentment, against the communal attitude of the civil and military officials of the State, in looting the people, insulting the women, imprisonment of the innocent, killing the people by drowning, killing of minor boys and

girls, defilement of mosques and shrines, arrests of the traders and other acts of cruelty, demands from the Maharaja that the prisoners be set free and those officials, who have perpetuated such cruel acts be punished.

- (c) "This huge gathering of the Muslims, suggests that as Pandit Hari Krishen Koul has been brought here by the Hindus of the Panjab to support the local Hindus, he be sent back, for his appointment in the State is against the interests of the Muslims".

At the call of All India Kashmir Committee, the Kashmir Day was observed in many cities and towns of India. Meetings were held at Deoband, Jehlum, Gurdaspur, Bhagalpur, Sargodha, Jang, Shahjahanpur, Bombay, Culcutta, Rangoon, Cuttak, Layalpur, Dera Ghazi Khan, Jaranwala, Mussori, Arwal, Panipat, Kalanoor, Bhani, Khaniwan, Hoshiarpur, Talwandi, Shahabad, Karnal, Pial Patiala, Manshera, Devlali, Balasapur, Cuttak, Rangpur, Kalicut and Lahore. At Lahore, Dr. Sheikh Mohammad Iqbal reiterated :

"To say that the present unrest in Kashmir is a communal strife, is totally baseless. I declare that it is neither Hindu-Muslim rift nor a communal movement to overthrow a Hindu Maharaja. When some Kashmiri Pandits come to me to present their grievances before the Maharaja, I exhort them to go back to Kashmir, unite with the Kashmiri Muslims and then present their joint demands to the Maharaja".⁹⁷

The Maharaja had opened an all out war against the Muslims because he believed that they were bent upon snatching his throne. He and his agents propagated communalism when termed the freedom movement as a movement of the Muslims against a Hindu Maharaja. The State Government poisoned the minds of the Jammu Dogras against the Kashmiri Muslims by propagating that the Muslims wanted the end of the Dogra rule. In Kashmir, the Government followed the policy of dividing the Muslims. The Kashmiri Pandit community remained loyal to the Maharaja to a great extent.

Armed Rebellion

The State Government ordered arrests of the leaders of the Jammu Muslims, on the 18th and 19th of August, 1931. All the mosques and the shrines in the region were placed in charge of the Military forces. On the 22nd September, 1931, the 25 thousand Muslims of Srinagar assembled in the Jamia Masjid to protest against the arrest of Sheikh Abdullah and Mufti Jalal-u-din. About 50 cavalry forces attacked the people. The soldiers started striking the people with spear heads. The people who raised the slogans : "Islam Zindabad, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Zindabad, Jalal-u-din Zindabad" were lathi charged by the Police, from the other side of the mosque. Some people were trampled under the horses. The people who were running were fired upon and the wounded were taken inside the mosque compound. The mob started pelting of stones and the Military fired again several rounds.

At that time Nawab Khusra Jang arrived. He ordered stoppage of fire and asked all to go inside the mosque. The names of the three martyrs, who laid their lives on this occasion are :

1. Mr. Nisar-ud-din
2. Khawaja Rasool Joo
3. Khawaja Assad-ullah Gilkar

Another procession which consisted of ladies and children which had started at Gawkadal, was also attacked by the Military and several women and children were trampled under the horses. At Basant Bagh, the Military fired upon the procession resulting in the death of 8 Muslims. But the Military took away 7 corpses. The Muslim processions at Islamabad, Baramulla and Sopore were fired upon by the Dogra army resulting in the death of many people. According to one estimate 25 Muslims died in these firings and 150 suffered serious injuries.⁹⁸

The Call of Jihad

Mir Waiz Moulvi Mohammad Yosuf Shah gave a call of *Jihad* and accordingly, thousands of the Muslims arrived at Ziarat Dastgir Sahib at Khanyar, Srinagar. Thousand of them were armed with spears, axes, sticks, hammers, knives, swords and a few hand guns. The Government engaged a photographer to take photographs of the armed people and prove to the British that an armed rebellion had started in Kashmir. Such photographs were sent to the British Resident in Kashmir for onward transmission to the Viceroy of India. The Government version of the event is given as under :

“On the 24th of September, 1931 more than fifty thousand Muslims assembled at Khanyar to stop the arrest of that agitator, against whom warrant of arrest had been issued. The mob possessed axes, swords, spears, sticks, acid and gun-powder. Fifteen thousand people guarded the site during night. About three hundred were armed with guns and had come from outside, so that they could participate in the violent activities. The Police is searching them”.⁹⁹

Maharaja Hari Singh got alarmed because he had never imagined an armed revolt. At his call Nawab Khusru Jang, Prince Abdul Rehman Afandi, Khawaja Salam Shah and Khawaja Noor Shah arrived at the scene and asked the people that the Maharaja was ready to hear the demands of the Muslims. The people nominated, Moulvi Mohammad Yosuf Shah, Khawaja Saad-ud-din Shahl and Moulvi Mohammad Abdullah Vakil to put forth the following immediate demands before the Maharaja :

- (a) Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and other political prisoners be released forthwith unconditionally.

- (b) As the people have no faith on orders signed and issued by the Hindu officials, future orders be issued under the signatures of the Maharaja.
- (c) The Prime Minister, Pandit Hari Krishen Koul and the Governor Thakur Kartar Singh be dismissed forthwith and they be reprimanded for atrocities committed upon the Muslims”.

The emissaries of the Maharaja succeeded in pacifying the people and the Kashmiri Muslims lost another chance of liquidating the Maharaja of Kashmir.

When the delegation met the Maharaja, he addressed them as under :

“Do you want to revolt ? Are you people bent upon to stage a war against my Government ? If I like I get you all skinned alive just now. No one can question me. But at an early occasion, I have declared that my religion is justice. As such, I pardon you. I am fully aware of the sufferings of my subjects. They are my children and I can personally enquire from them and redress their grievances. But I do not like that my subjects be instigated to revolt. I will shoot all such fellows. Go and tell the people who have assembled at Khanyar to return to their homes. Tell them that those who instigate people to rebel against our Government, that they will be given such severe punishments which would be example for others”.

This shows that the Maharaja was in an agitative mood and wanted to pressurize them psychologically. He did not hear a single word from the delegation. The leaders returned from the Maharaja's palace and informed the people that the Maharaja had promised to accept their demands within two days. It is most unfortunate that they had told a lie and deceived the innocent masses.

Animal Kingdom

On the 25th of September, 1931, that Maharaja exhibited force on the people of the city, which was placed under the Military. The Dogra soldiers praded the city, forced the people to raise the slogan : ‘*Maharaja Bahadur ki Jai*’. The Muslims were made to salute the flag of the Maharaja. Curfew was imposed during nights and the days were reserved for flogging. For this purpose 4 Flogging Stations were fixed in city and similar centres were established in all District headquarters.

Nearly all the Police Stations in the Valley of Kashmir were full with agitators. These agitators belonged to different age groups and some of them were old and aged. They were termed as convicts and were to be punished by floggings. For this purpose, triangular wooden black-boards of schools were acquired for each flogging station. Where no such apparatus was available, such wooden triangular stakes were got prepared. For flogging of agitators, hard criminals and convicts of jails were requisitioned. One by one an agitator was brought near the triangular stake, bound with it, stripped naked. The officer would then give verdict about the number of lashes or strokes to be inflicted on the agitator. The scourger would then whirl himself round and strike the naked

buttocks of the poor creature. After each merciless stroke the agitator would cry and his swollen blood and flesh would squash out. After a few number of lashes, the agitator would swoon or faint. His pulse would be checked to see whether he was alive or not. After recovery the remaining number of strokes would be inflicted and then he would be dragged like a dead dog and placed on one side of the yard to be removed to his house by his wailing relatives. The men would not come to fetch the poor creature for fear of being caught instead of the agitator but mostly, women and children and aged relatives would come to take away the flogged man. Many of these flogged agitators were crippled for life. As all the captured agitators were Muslims, they would give a piercing shriek or cry; "Ya Rasool Allah!" after each stroke.

Such inhuman floggings became order of the day and many Kashmiri Muslims suffered on this account. Each day about two thousand agitators would be flogged at the rate of 10 to 24 lashes.

Flogging created a stir throughout the country. The *Tribune* wrote as under:

"The public opinion in whole of the country will protest strongly against this inhuman barbarity. Flogging is a barbarous punishment and it cannot be premitted on any ground whatsoever. We wish the Maharaja to issue immediate orders stopping this insulting and terrible action. Surely the Government of Kashmir is caught in difficulties but infliction of flogging the public cannot be justified."¹⁰⁰

The Dogra troops misbehaved with the people and gave full play to their racial animosity and religious perversity when dealing with the Muslims.¹⁰¹ The people were dragged from their houses and shops, on mere pretences and beaten severely. They were tortured in many ways. There was no law in the city except the law of the jungle. The Military troops looted houses and shops and there are official and un-official reports about the rape of women.

But all these atrocities did not produce peace and order. The Muslims of the Panjab could not tolerate these atrocities on their brethren and various protest meetings were held in all the towns. In these meetings, resolutions were passed urging the Government of India to intervene in the matter. Succeeding groups of Muslims started march pasts towards the State boundaries. These groups were organised by the All India Kashmir Committee and Majlis-i-Ahrar, a nationalist Muslim organization.¹⁰² Accordingly, the Maharaja got panicky and issued a proclamation on the 5th of October, 1931. It announced:

1. the withdrawal of the Notification No. L of 1928 (S).
2. the abrogation of the emergency measures.
3. the withdrawal of the troops from the civil area of Srinagar.
4. the release of all persons interned or under trial for offences.
5. the withdrawal of all pending prosecutions.

Further an Enquiry Committee was appointed on the 13th of October, 1931 under the Chairmanship of Mr. L. Middleton to enquire into the causes of the disturbances. Pandit Hari Krishen Koul was removed from the Primiership of State after having served to Maharaja for nearly seven months, handing over to Mr. Colvin. The Maharaja appealed to the British for aid military help and the Government of India despatched their troops to the State to restore law and order. The British troops took over the protection of the boundaries of the State and did not allow, Ahrar and Muslim volunteers to enter the Valley of Kashmir. It appears that the Viceroy had changed his mind due to a secret deal with the Maharaja. The President of the All India Kashmir Committee, under whose directions the Kashmiri agitation was going on noticed this change of mind in the Viceroy of India. He had received information about some sort of negotiations going on between the Hindu leaders and the Maharaja on one side and with the Viceroy on the other side. The British Government in India had become cold towards the Muslims and the Maharaja had been given a free hand to inflict atrocities on the Kashmiris.

Under such circumstances, there was no alternative but to ask the Muslim masses to stand on their own legs and fight against repression. Mirza Bashir-ud-din Mehmood, the President of the Kashmir Committee issued following directions for the Muslims of Kashmir:

"I think that the best way to serve our country is that every Kashmiri, who aspires to be free, decides that even if he has to spend his whole life, he must spend it for freedom. And even teach his children the same lesson. Everyone must understand that for winning freedom, he must sacrifice all; even his life so that all obstacles in the way are removed and he keeps the struggle alive."¹⁰³

At this critical juncture, the Muslims of Kashmir stood divided among themselves. Anti-Muslim agencies had propagated many conflicting trends in them. On the one hand the issue of a Panjabee Muslim and a Kashmiri Muslim was being propagated. Among the Kashmiri leaders, suspicion about one another was created. Mir Wais was told that his prestige was at stake and all fame had gone to Sheikh Abdullah. The Pandits of Kashmir encouraged sectarian differences; the Shia-Sunni question, the Sunni-Wahabi issue and other such sensitive issues, among the Muslims of Kashmir. The Muslim masses, being illiterate fell victims of this propaganda. Another very sensitive issue came into the hands of non-Muslims and it was the Ahmediya issue and they made full use of it to destroy the unity of Muslims. It is a historical fact that monarchs, kings and Sultan have taken advantage of divergent sectarian views in Islam. Even imperialism and enemies of Islam had to recourse to it when they wanted to divide the Muslims. The same old and tested technique was employed by the Maharaja and his advisors. Since the day, the Muslims of Kashmir raised their head against the obnoxious rule of the Hindu Maharaja, he and his advisors took various measures to divide the Muslims. For this purpose, not only traitors were

purchased but a systematic propaganda was started to stir up disharmony among the Muslims.

The name of Moulvi Abdullah Vakil is well-known in Kashmir as a political mentor of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and other Kashmiri leaders. He was an Ahmedi Muslim and so was Ghulam Nabi Gilkar, Moulvi Abdur-Rahim, Moulvi Bashir Ahmad and many others who were a brain behind the 1931 agitation. "Moulvi Abdullah Vakil is among the persons who are worthy of first mention for gathering the storm of 1931. He was a political thinker who spent most of his time among youngmen, teaching them politics. His connections with Sheikh Abdullah came as a handy tool in the hands of his enemies to defame Sheikh Sahib in the eyes of Muslims.¹⁰⁴ A time came when his colleague, Mir Waiz Yusuf Shah and others became his enemies, due to this propaganda unleashed by the non-Muslims and agents of the Maharaja.

The advisors of the Maharaja launched a drive to sow seeds of disention among the Muslims by publishing reports that the President of the All India Kashmiri Conference and his other associates were not true Muslims. It was also propagated by the Hindu press that the main purpose of the Committee was to preach Ahmedi sectarian views among the Kashmiris in the garb of helping them. In order to counteract this mischievous propaganda, a statement by 22 Muslim devines and intellectual was issued at Lahore, which read as under :

"We are of the firm opinion that the Kashmir Administration, is using this weapon to undermine the strength of the Kashmiri Muslims, so as to bring sectarian divisions among them. The Kashmir problem is a major Islamic issue and to weaken it on the basis of sectarian views is work as traitor to Islam and the Muslims. Such efforts, we hope and believe will not succeed and the Muslims will properly retaliate by unity against this weapon of the Government".¹⁰⁵

Mirza Bashir-ud-din Mehmood Ahmed, the Head of the Ahmediya Movement in Islam, also issued a statement to the press declaring that affording of all material and moral help to the our Kashmiri brothers was a purely humanitarian act and the mischievous propaganda done by our enemies was aimed at dividing the Muslims and we all should work wholeheartedly to help our Kashmiri brothers.¹⁰⁶

It was in October, 1931 that Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah telegraphically asked the President of the All India Kashmir Committee to depute the Secretary of the Committee and others to Srinagar, so that a memorandum of demands be prepared for submission to the Maharaja. Accordingly, Moulvi Abdul Rahim Darad reached Srinagar and prepared the historic memorandum.¹⁰⁷ It demanded release of all prisoners and constitution of an independent Commission under the Presidentship of Judge of an Indian High Court, to look into the grievances of the Muslims and their rights. It also demanded that the Commission should

include a substantial representative of the Muslims. This memorandum was which bore the initials of Mir Waiz Moulvi Mohammad Yousaf, Mir Waiz Ahmed Ullah Hamdani, Khwaja Saad-ud-din Shawl, Agha Syed Hussain Shah Jalali, Khwaja Ghulam Ahmed Ashai, Mistri Yaqub Ali, Khawaja Shahab-ud-din, Shaikh Abdul Hamid, Chowdhary Gulam Abbas, Sardar Gohar Rehman and Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, was presented before the Maharaja on the 19th of October, 1931.

Gilgit is a meeting ground of Afghanistan, Russia, China and India and its importance can be described in no better words than those of Curzon, the Viceroy of India :

"It is one of the northern gates of India through which a would be invader must advance, if he advances at all. Gilgit occupier a strategic place and the Indian Government harassed by Russia's growing restlessness in Central Asia, knew it for the key of great northern gateway into India, a key worth holding even at some cost in toil, money and valuable though less-human lives".

It is clear that the fear of Russia always haunted the British Government of India and it shaped its policies accordingly. They had to take up Gilgit under their control and the upheaval in Kashmir provided them with a good opportunity to obtain Gilgit and adjoining areas from the Maharaja. At the same time, the Maharaja was in very bad circumstances because he could not kill millions of Muslims in Kashmir. Hence, he submitted before the Viceroy telling him that the State of Jammu & Kashmir was their creation and had been bestowed upon his ancestors for loyal services. It was this secret deal which changed the attitude of the British towards the Kashmiri agitation. They decided to appease the Muslims by sending Mr. Colvin as the new Prime Minister of the Maharaja as well as deputing Mr. B.J. Glancy to look into the grievances of the Muslims. The British diplomacy had killed two birds with one stone. The Maharaja who had boasted of his being "India first and Indian last" in the Round Table Conference, stood humbled. The Muslims of Kashmir, who had aspired to wrest Kashmir out of the hands of a Hindu Maharaja also felt satisfied.

Secret Deal between the Viceroy and the Maharaja

It was Curzon, the Viceroy of India who dreamt of establishing a Trance-Caspian Empire, including Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia and connect it with the Indo-China dominions with India as the centre. But after the First World War, political events turned against this plan due to the defeat of British imperialism by Mustafa Kamal and Lenin. The establishment of the Soviet Socialistic Union dealt a death blow to the British design of world conquest and also ushered freedom movements in various parts of Asia, including India. It was Mahatama Gandhi who launched his Civil Disobedience

Movement in 1930. In Kashmir, there had occurred agitations in 1865, 1870, 1925 and the 1931 agitation had assumed a mass character. The British Government in India had two options before it; one was to sympathise with the suffering Muslim masses under the Hindu Maharaja and the other was to help the Maharaja, who was the stooge to curb such political upheavals. There were occasions when the Viceroy was thinking about taking over of Kashmir under its direct control. But later, he decided to maintain the *status quo* in view of larger imperialistic interests. In order to keep safe their Indian Empire, the British took effective steps to consolidate, what they termed as "the scientific frontier."¹⁰⁸ They built strong military bases at Quetta and Khyber pass and developed friendly relations with Afghanistan. Having done this, they desired to seal other doors in the North of India and these were Gilgit and Leh. Thus Kashmir could serve as a barrier, if need be, against Russia.

Most of the Muslim youngmen, who were educated but without any jobs now had a fair chance to obtain services. Hence it so happened that most of the educated agitators and leaders like Moulvi Abdul Rahim, Mufti Jalal-ud-din, Khwaja Mohammad Rajab, Hakim Ghulam Saffdar, Khwaja Maqbool Pandit, Mr. G.A. Ashai, Mr. A. Fazili and others joined services offered by the Maharaja. However, Chowdhari Ghulam Abbas, Mr. Ghulam Nabi Gilkar continued their political activities. Moulvi Yosuf Saha, the Mir Waiz of Kashmir started remaining away from Shaikh Abdullah but the Muslims of Kashmir gave him affection and love and to them he was a God-sent savior. He had obtained new supporters and workers, foremost among these were, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, Moulvi Mohammad Syed Masoodi Khwaja G.M. Sadiq, Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beg, Mufti Zia-ud-din, Mir Mohammad Maqbool Gilani, Master Abdul Aziz, Raja Mohammad Akbar Khan, Mr. Mohammad Yaya Rafiqi, Mr. Mohammad Ismail Sagar, Khwaja Mohammad Yusuf Qureshi, Qazi Abdul Ghani, Sofi Mohammad Akbar, Mr. Abdul Ghani Tarali, Khwaja Saddar-din Mujahid, Mr. Ghulam Qadir Janbaz, Mr. Abdul Kabir Khan, Mr. Ali Mohammad Tariq, Peer Abdul Ahmad Shah, Peer Mohammad Maqbool, Abdul Rahim Dar, Munshi Mohammad Ishaq, Khwaja Ghulam Mohammad Dar, Khwaja Mohammad Sultan Galadar, Mian Nizam-ud-din, Haji Ahm-d-ullah Shahdad, Khwaja Ghulam Hassan Khan, Mr. Abdul Gaffar, Haji Jalal-ud-din, Khwaja Ghulam Qadir, Mr. G.M. D. Zohra, Khwaja Ahsan-ullah, Malik Abdul Ghani, Pir Afzal Makhdoomi, Mohammad Ayub Sabir, and a band of other workers in all parts of the State.

Glancy Commission

The Maharaja had to bow before the public unrest and as such, appointed a Commission of Enquiry to be headed by Mr. B.J. Glancy, on the 12th of November, 1931 to look into the whole question of unrest and make necessary recommendations thereof. It consisted of four non-official members, presided over by Mr. Glancy, whose services were lent to the State by the Government.

of India at the request of the Maharaja. The function of the Commission was to enquire into and report on the various complaints of a religious or a general nature already submitted to the Maharaja's Government.¹⁰⁹ The Commission started its work in the last week of November, 1931 and arrived at conclusions in its report, which was put up to the Maharaja for orders. After much higgling, he issued the following orders on the 10th of April, 1932 :

ORDERS : The Maharaja accepted the recommendations contained in the main report and ordered that steps be taken to implement them at the earliest possible moment. The summary of the orders is given below :

1. Restoration of religious buildings

His Highness the Maharaja Bahadur is pleaded to command that the recommendations of the Commission in respect to the restoration of sacred building etc., should be strictly carried out. The Governors of Jammu and Kashmir will be responsible for seeing the necessary action is taken.

The Madin Sahib Shrine at Srinagar should be handed over as soon as the representatives of the Muslim community notify their wishes, duly endorsed by the Anjuman Islamia on behalf of the Shia Community as to the authority to be given charge thereof.

Similarly the area known as the "Idgah ground" of Srinagar should be made over to the Muslim representatives as soon as they provide a written undertaking that the right enjoyed by the public in regard to grazing, recreation etc. will be duly respected.

The Khanqah Sufi Shah at Jammu and Babu Mosque should be trusted to purely Muslim Management.

Where it can be shown that any sacred building etc. has been wrongly transferred by the State to a third-party, the property in question should not be called upon to pay compensation to the party now in possession. If any compensation is decreased by the Civil Court, the State will arrange for the payment thereof.

The Governor of Kashmir should submit a report as to the settlement effected between the Hindu and Muslim Communities in respect to the Shah Hamdan Mosque and the Maha Kali shrine, and should show whether there is any sufficient reason for modifying the settlement in question.

Applications for the allotment of waste land for the construction of *viharas*, mosques, churches etc. should receive favourable consideration in all cases in which this is practicable.

Any complaint of interferences with the calling of *Azan* should be carefully investigated and where the offence is established, it should be effectively suppressed and the offender punished.

Any attempt on the part of the Police or any other officials or non-officials to harass those who have change or intended to change, their religion should be strongly discouraged, and those responsible should be dealt with severely.

2. *Insults to religion*

All officers concerned should make it their duty to see that the severest notice is taken of any provocation of this nature, irrespective of the community to which the delinquent belongs.

The High Court of Judicature should enjoin on all subordinate Courts the necessity, of awarding, in all cases where proof is established, a punishment sufficient to bring home to offenders the gravity of their offence.

His Highness the Maharaja Bahadur most earnestly trusts that the leaders of all communities will as suggested by the Commission, do their utmost to impress on their followers the necessity of respecting the feelings of the others in this matter.

3. *Recommendations regarding education of the Muslims*

The Department concerned should submit proposal for the fulfilment of the Commission's recommendations in all respects.

In particular the Department should devote its attention to the expansion of Primary Education. A definite programme should be prepared and kept up to date, it should be accompanied by a map illustrating the progress already effected and the development contemplated in the course of the next three years. A programme for the construction of School buildings should also be drawn up, and the Department should report whether there is any objection to the immediate adoption of Commission's proposal that lump sum grants should be allotted to villagers for the building of schools.

Steps should be taken to increase the number of *Mullas* or Arabic teachers and the unnecessary transfer of *Mullas*, in the case of all village teachers, should be avoided.

Instructions in *Shikasta* writing and in the reading of Pathwari's papers should form part of the curriculum of Primary Schools. The Department should see that the education imparted to village schools is such as to equip the pupils of their normal occupation. Revenue officials should take as interest in the Primary schools situated within their charges, and should encourage *Zaildars* and *Numberdars* to do the same.

The Governor of Jammu should report whether there is any objection to the allotment of the Gandoo-di-Chawani site for the construction of the Islamia High School. Should any such objection exist, an alternative site should be suggested. Care should be taken to see that admission to science classes in schools and colleges is impartially regulated so as to cater for the legitimate interests of all communities.

Special Mohammadan scholarships should be equated in value with merit scholarships and effect should be given to the Commission's proposals in the matter of free studentships orphange scholarships etc.

The recommendations put forward as regards teacher in Girls schools, the medium of instruction and arrangements for *pardah* should be carried out.

The proportion of Muslims employed as teachers, Inspectors and clerks in the Education Department Secretariat should be increased as soon as possible. A special Inspector for the promotion of Mohammadan Education should be appointed and should work independently of Provincial Inspectors.

4. *Recruitment of Muslims in State Services*

The proposal of the Commission in regard to the minimum qualifications to be required for various classes of appointments are approved, and action will be taken accordingly.

As regards the publication of vacancies, the procedure recommended by the Commission should be strictly followed and Ministers and Heads of Department should make it their business to see that there is no deviation therefrom.

His Highness is also pleased to approve of the Commission proposals in respect to powers of appointment.

The submission of six monthly returns should continue regularly on the lines indicated by the Commission and a yearly statement giving the composition of all State Department should be published as recommended.

The procedure in regard to direct appointments should be regulated in accordance with the suggestions put forward by the Commission.

In the matter of local appointments the recommendations made meet with the full approval of His Highness and should henceforward be adopted. It is clearly in the interests both of good government and of the subjects of the State that local inhabitants should be selected, as far as possible, for such posts as those of Patwaris, Forest Guards, Game Law Watchers etc.

5. *Recovery of land revenue and other taxes*

His Highness the Maharaja Bahadur is pleased to approve the recommendation that recovery of the State *Malikana* should be discontinued throughout the State territories, subject to the conditions which the Commission has proposed. In the matter of *Nazrana*, the Revenue Minister should put forward his proposals as to the amount to be charged, the charge recommended should be moderate in all cases.

His Highness is also graciously pleased to concur in the recommendations that proprietary Rights should be conferred in respect to all lands of which the ownerships is now held by the State and occupancy rights are enjoyed by private persons. The Revenue Minister should in the first instance examine the safeguards suggested by the Commission for the protection of agricultural classes, and should submit his report accordingly.

In regard to Grazing tax, His Highness approves the proposal that the fixed *Khacharai* demand should be forthwith suspended in the seven Tehsils, namely, Jammu, Samba, Akhnur, Kathua, Jasmargharh, Mirpur and Bhimber which have been specially mentioned by the Commission in this behalf.

Charges imposed in addition to the fixed *Kahcharai* demand in the case of 'Dhars' in the Jammu province, when such additional charges are not levied in the Kashmir Province, should be discontinued. Action should be taken to define the interprovincial boundary for the purpose of *Kahcharai* collections and no *Kahcharai* payment should be demanded from butchers and other persons when they bring goats and sheep within the municipal limits for purposes of slaughter.

Nautor outstandings in the Mirpur Tehsil now under suspension should be written off.

Any complaints in regard to classification of soil, measurement of land, *Bachh* distribution etc. should be thoroughly investigated in all cases in which it can be shown that those concerned were not afforded due opportunity of raising objections at the proper time.

The recommendations made by the Commission on complaints received from frontier districts regarding the periodical revision of commutations rates, the amount of interest to be charged on grain advances and the limitation of *Nautor* are approved and should be carried into effect.

In the matter of trees, no restriction should be imposed on the cutting of walnut trees growing on land held by agriculturists and the assessment imposed on any such tree should be cancelled when it is removed. In regard to mulberry trees preference should as far as possible be given to land holders on whose land such trees are standing, when seed is distributed by the Sericulture Department. Power to authorise the cutting of Chinar trees, where necessity raised should be given to Tehsildars. Other minor recommendations made by the Commission in regard to trees are also approved.

So far as it relates to *Chaks* and *Jagirs*, His Highness is in entire accord with the Commission that neither in the matter of the due fulfilment of the *Raj Tilak* boons, nor in any way whatsoever should the interests of Zamindars suffer from the assignment of land to other persons.

In all cases in which it may be found necessary to acquire agricultural land for State purposes, those dispossessed should where practicable, be allotted similar land elsewhere.

6. Measures against corruption

Every endeavour should be made to put end to irregular exactions. It is to be hoped that the due delegation of authority will afford more leisure to Minister and the Heads of Departments to supervise the work of their subordinates. Inspections and supervisions should be careful and constant as possible. All officers should be warned that corrupt practices are not to be tolerated and exemplary punishment should be awarded to any who can be proved to have offended.

7. Kar-i-Sarkar

All officers must make it their duty to see that payment is made in full for services rendered. As circumstances permit the 'Ras' system on the frontier should be replaced by the appointment of contractors. The provision of free supplies should in no case be allowed.

8. Orders regarding various Department

All forests officers should interest themselves in seeing that Zamindars and others receive the full benefit of the concessions to which they are entitled.

Agriculturists should be afforded every facility for protecting their crops from the depredations of wild animals. Applications for arms licenses in this behalf should receive prompt and favourable consideration, where there is no reason to contrary.

Locals officers should be instructed to consult the inhabitants of all townships in which *Dharat* is levied in regard to the purpose to which the funds realised should be devoted.

A regular programme for the improvement of communications as funds permit, should be drawn up and a map, as suggested by the Commission should be prepared.

Improvements to Srinagar city in the matter of drainage and the widening of street should continue to receive attention and funds should be allotted for this purpose as circumstances may permit.

The provisions of a proper approach road to the Muslim Cemetery at Jammu should be duly considered.

The Medical Department should have their consideration to the Commission's recommendations that Dais should be attached to dispensaries and proposals should be submitted accordingly.

The Minister in charge should devote his earnest attention to the development of the textile industry and the encouragement of fruit growing.

A financial statement showing the condition of *Dharmarth* funds, should be presented without delay. Any surplus funds be devoted as recommended by the Commission, to the furtherance of beneficial objects compatible with the objects of trusts, and particular attention should be paid to the establishment of *Gawshalas* and improved water supplies.

The practice of recovering *Dharmarth* dues in kind should be replaced as soon as practicable by cash recoveries in all cases.

The orders already issued in regard to the change of the *Chari* connected with the pilgrimage to Amarnathji, should be duly carried out.

Any complaints of such irregular exactions should be thoroughly investigated and the practice, if it is still found to survive, should be effectively suppressed.

The enactment of a revised Press Regulation with a view to bringing the

State procedure as far as practicable into conformity with British Indian legislation in this respect has been engaging the attention of His Highness Government and orders are being issued. In the beginning of the year 1932, the Muslims in the State suffered untold miseries. It started with a civil disobedience movement from Mirpur, where the peasants refused to pay land revenue to the Government. The Governor of Jammu and the Inspector General of Police visited the region along with a huge force and started snap operations against the villages inhabited by the Muslims. At Khari, where the peasants refused to pay revenue, all belongings of the villagers were confiscated with the result that the people got enraged and raised anti-Maharaja slogans. This was a signal for wholesale arrests and firings. In the firing 5 persons died and 25 received serious injuries.¹¹⁰

Such Military and Police strikes in other villages continued for a few months, with the result that a few thousand Muslim families migrated to the British territories. Nearly three thousand refugees settled in Jhelum.¹¹¹ On the 2nd of January, 1932, the Hindu Rajputs of Jammu met the Maharaja and hatched a conspiracy to annihilate the Muslims in the region by loot, fire and general killings and massacres.¹¹² On the 27th of January, 1932 Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and his other colleagues were arrested and a few including, Mufti Zia-ud-din of Poonch were externed from the State. Accordingly, the President of the All India Kashmir Committee gave the following ultimatum to the Viceroy of India :

“Despite our compromising efforts, the Stae State Government is engaged in violent activities against the Muslims. The Stae State authorities want to create an excuse to let loose a reign of terror on the people and gain support of the British Government.

I appeal to you for immediate intervension, so that the conditions do not become from bad to worse. If your Excellency hesitates to intervene, I must be informed so that I am able to tell the Kashmiri Muslims that now there is no way out for them, except to perish in struggle or condescend to perpetual enslavement.¹¹³

The atrocities resulted in creating a wide spread resentment among the Muslims of the Northern India and the Govt. of India was forced to intervene. The Maharaja had to dismiss Pandit Hari Krishen Koul and appoint Mr. Colwin as his Prime Minister. It was on the 3rd of April, 1932 that a deputation met him from the All India Kashmir Committee and demanded immediate release of the political prisoners.¹¹⁴ Soms of the political leaders including Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad was released on the 9th of May, 1932. and Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah along with 35 colleagues was released on the 5th of June, 1932. The All India Kashmir Committee deputed Syed Zain-ul-abidin, Wali-ulla Shah on a fact-finding mission to Srinagar.¹¹⁵ He submitted a report to the Maharaja about the officers, who had committed atrocities on the people and the Maharaja.

had to order forced retirement of Mr. Salisbury, Special Officer Mirpur, Pandit Ram Chand, D. I. G., Pandit Chuni Lal, Sub-Inspector Police, Mr, Ram Rattan, Wazir-i-Wazarat Punch, Pandit Bal kak Dhar, Wazir-I-Wazarat Islamabad and some other police officers.

Roti Agitation

The recommendations of the Glancy Commission satisfied the Muslims to a large extent. It also proved that they had a just cause and their grievances had been ignored for decades by the Dogra Maharajas. The methods of reprimand employed by the rulers had failed and also showed that given the right leadership, the people could hand the Maharaja to accept their demands. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah had now emerged as the true leader of the Kashmiris. The Muslims felt jubilant at the outcome of the Glancy Commission. For the first time, their places of worship, that had passed into the hands of the Dogra regime were restored to them. For the first time, their recruitment in services was guaranteed. For the first time, proprietary rights on the lands held by them were granted. For the first time, restrictions on the freedom of press and associations were removed and it was decided to have a representative Assembly in the State.

The Pandit Community, which had upto then served the cause of autocracy got nothing and felt aggrieved. They started what is known as the “Roti agitation”, demanding more services. The agitation fizzled out after a week. A delegation of Hindus led by Dr. Monji, President of the Hindu Mahasabha appealed for cancellation of orders given on the Glancy Commission Report but the Maharaja could do nothing. The Pandits disowned Pandit Prem Nath Bazaz, who represented them in the Glancy Commission and started to incite communal troubles in the valley. The students of the Islamia School were stoned under an organized scheme and Pandit Jia Lal Kilam incited the Pandits against the Muslims. The net result was that there occurred individual fights between the Hindus and the Muslims. Nearly 145 people suffered injuries. One Pandit and one Muslim lady died in the riots.

At this juncture, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah came forward as the apostle of peace and appealed to both the communities to live as brothers. He organised Peace Committees in the valley. The political movement led by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah had proved a success and had made its base among the masses. The people were now ready to discard conservative leadership and as such remained loyal to Sheikh Abdullah, whom they considered as the true leader of Kashmiris.

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13. Shri Gopal Nutia, *Kashmeer*, Hindi Magazine, p. 142.
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23. F.A. Abba, Profile of Abdullah, p. 6.
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26. Mahaz, Sher-i-Kashmir Number, p. 131.
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47. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
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51. *Tarikh-i-Ahmediyat*, Vol. 6, pp. 426-428. Mr. Ghulam Nabi Gilkar administered oath to about one hundred youths to strive for the end of the Dogra raj.
52. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, *Payam-i-Sadaqat*. See, Profile of Abdullah by F.A. Abba, p. 25 for photo-copy of the document.
53. Mr. Ghulam Nabi Gilkar who was a schemer, deputed his men to Mir-Waiz to convene a congregation at the Jamia Masjid in Srinagar and allow Sheikh Abdullah to deliver a speech. Mir-Waiz, having agreed, Mr. Gilkar took measures to collect people and incite them against the Maharaja.
54. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah's *Swaneh-Umri*, p. 16.
55. Letter of Sheikh Abdullah to the Education authorities, as quoted in *Swaneh-Umri*, p. 16.
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57. Bazaz, P.N., *Kashmir Ka Gandhi* p. 46.
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68. Statement of Aziz Din Dy. Inspector General of Police, Srinagar Riots Enquiry Committee, 1931.
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95. Among the other members of the Committee, mention may be made of Khwaja Hassan Nizami, Syed Habib-ullah, Moulvi Noor-ul-Haq, Moulvi Mohammad Ismail, Sheikh Rahim, Sir Zulfiqar Ali Khan, Syed Mohsan Shah, and other members from Kashmir and Frontier illaqa.
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97. Manzoor Fazili, *Socialist Ideas and Movements in Kashmir*, p. 57.
98. *Alfazal*, Qadian, 29th Sept., 1931.
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Muslim Conference

"The hoisting of the green flag is a new epoch in the history of Kashmir".

—Wali Ullah Zain-ul-abidin

It is a historical fact that the Jammu and Kashmir State was labouring under many disadvantages. The Muslims who formed an overwhelming majority in the State were treated as second-class subjects of the Maharaja. As a Hindu from Jammu, he favoured his co-religionists; the Dogra Rajputs of Jammu and the Hindu Pandits of Kashmir. While he doubted the allegiance of the Muslim masses, he demanded unreserved obedience from his co-religionists. Being apprehensive, he retained with him all legislative, executive and judicial powers and denied all liberties and fundamental rights to his subjects.¹

Sheikh Abdullah wished to bring about a revolution in the life of every Kashmiri, irrespective of creed but the Hindus and Pandits were apprehensive of his motives. Whenever he raised his voice against injustice, the non-Muslims raised the cry: Hinduism in danger. They considered Hari Singh as their protector and he also assumed that position by styling himself as: "Shriman Indar Mahandar Rajrajeshwar Maharajadhiraj Shri Harisinghji Jammu Kashmir Naresh Tatha Tibbet adi Deshahhipathi."² The Maharaja had no sympathy with the Muslims who were governed like dumb driven cattle.

Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah had started his political career as champion of the Muslim cause, but no fair minded person would dub him communal on that account. He could hardly be blamed if he was destined to lead the majority community of Muslims in the State. Strangely enough, it was this very majority community, which was the main victim of the Dogra despotism.³

It is also a fact that it were the Muslims who had faced bullets of the Dogra soldiers on the 13th of July, 1931. During the subsequent days, it were the Muslim Youth, old men and women, who had suffered at the hands of the Maharaja. Not only women were molested, elderly people were stripped naked on wooden stakes and flogged. After the imprisonment of their leaders, the Muslims were made to crawl on the roads and forced to raise slogans "Maharaja Bahadur-ki-Jai". During all these privations, atrocities and sufferings, the non-Muslim citizens of Kashmir, instead of sympathising with Muslims, went right to denounce them as rebels. Unfortunately, instead of

siding with the sufferers, they took the side of the Maharaja, who was their co-religionist.

Divide and Rule

Hence, in order to safeguard their position, the Pandits in particular and the Hindus in general started a policy of divide and rule among the Muslims. Fortunately for them Pandit Hari Krishen Koul, the Prime Minister was brought by the Maharaja to implement this scheme. From the first day of assuming his office, he tried to bring out discussions among the leaders of the Muslims. In this connection he obtained the support of some Muslim *jagirdars* and officers also. On the 21st of September, 1931 he invited Mir Waiz Moulvi Mohammad Yosuf Shah, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and other leaders to his office. While he threatened Sheikh Sahib with dire consequences, he intensionally remained polite towards the Mir Waiz. On that very day, he ordered arrest of Sheikh Sahib, and his colleagues and spread Moulvi Mohammad Yosuf Shah. The net result was that the Muslims masses began to entertain doubts about the sincerity of Moulvi Mohammad Yosuf Shah towards the Muslims cause. In August, 1931, he made Mir Waiz to send a telegram to the Viceroy of India, stating that the Muslims were faithful to the Maharaja and wished to settle their problems with him without outside interference. For this act the Mir Waiz was granted a *khillat* of Rs. 600 annually. But he was forced by the Muslims to repudiate this gratification. The Muslims in general went away from the Mir Waiz and joined Sheikh Sahib in his struggle. Moulvi Yosuf Shah even declared from Jamia Masjid that Sheikh Sahib has joined the Amediaya Sect of Islam. This resulted in a division in the Kashmir Committee and Mirza Mian Bashir-ud-din had to resign from its Presidentship. Sheikh Sahib had also to declare that he was not a Ahmedi.

It is evident that the Prime Minister had succeeded in separating the two senior Muslim politicians and now, both Sheikh Abdullah and Moulvi Yosuf Shah became more or less opponents of each other. It was not only the division of two persons but the Muslim community at large.

The Government of the Maharaja incited another trouble among the Muslims. In Kashmir, the heads of two factions have claimed the title of Mir Waiz, one of Jamia Masjid and the other of Khanqah-i-Moulla. Both of them tried to exploit the religious sentiments of their followers against each other. Soon after the emergence of Sheikh Abdullah, as a mass leader Mir Waiz Moulvi Yosuf Shah drifted away from him and joined hands with the reactionaires and went to the Government side. The other Mir Waiz, Moulvi Ahmad Ullah Hamdani, joined hands with the Sheikh Abdullah. Thus, began that internal dissension among the Muslims of Kashmir, which persists even today. The followers of both the Mir Waiz staged a war on the 16th April, 1932 and fought with each other. Many innocent people suffered grievous injuries. The Government took advantage of the position and imprisoned Moulvi Yosuf

Shah. It was a pity that Muslims fought each other in the Jamia Masjid in the name of Islam.⁴ It was clear that the Government of the Maharaja had succeeded to drive a wedge among the Muslims. Sheikh Abdullah rightly considered this trouble as a threat to the freedom struggle. As such, he now thought of organising the Muslims on a common platform.

The representatives of the Muslims appointed a Committee on the 4th June, 1932 to organise the Muslims on a political platform. This Committee framed the constitution of a political organisation to be known as the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference. Its aims included :

- (a) organisation of the Muslims of the State;
- (b) strengthening of unity between the Muslims;
- (c) safeguarding of the political rights of the Muslims;
- (d) struggle for moral, educational, social, cultural and financial uplift of the Muslims.

The first annual session of the Conference was held from 15th of October to 19th of October, 1932 at Pather Masjid under the Presidentship of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah.⁵ The flag hoisting ceremony was conducted by Wali Ullah Zain-u-abidin, who declared as under :

“The Kashmiris, who were considered as a dead nation, for three centuries have arisen again and are today a living nation. During the last year, they have offered great sacrifices in their struggle for people’s demands. The whole world is amazed to see that a nation which had fallen in the cave of slumber for centuries and that nation which was considered uncivilised has again obtained its place in the community of nations. Today, with the hoisting of this green flag with crescent opens a new chapter in the history of Kashmir. As such, it is the duty of the Kashmiris to see that it remains hoisted always. This flag of the conference, is the harbinger of love, peace and brotherhood among all the communities living in the State and it is the guarantor of peace, progress and happiness of all subjects of the Maharaja”.

At the time of inauguration, a message from the President of All India Kashmir Committee was read, which among other things stated :

“I hope the proceedings of the Conference would be conducted with true patriotism, courage, forbearance, toleration, gratitude and wisdom, so that your country attains progress.”⁶

It must be said to Sheikh Abdullah’s credit that from the very beginning of the Muslim Conference, he knew that the real fight was not between two religious Communities but between haves and have-nots; between the oppressed and the oppressors. He started giving vent to his feelings in broadbasing the Muslim Conference from the very beginning.⁷

At the occasion of the inauguration of the first session of the Conference Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah declared as under :

“The Muslim Conference is not a communal organization and its existence will prove beneficial to all the communities living in this State. We have declared it at the outset of the struggle that the Kashmiri movement is not a communal movement, but for the redress of the grievances of all people. I assure my Hindu and Sikh brothers that we are ready to remove their sufferings as we have done in the case of the Muslims”.⁸

The Conference adopted several resolutions demanding immediate action on the recommendations of the Glancy Commission. Among other things it demanded convening of the Legislative Assembly, freedom of press and platform, representation of the Muslims in services, admission of the Kashmiris in the State army and grant of elementary rights to the people of Poonch. A Committee consisting of Chowdhary Ghulam Abbas, Khawaja Saad-ud-Din Shawl, Agha Syed Hussain Jalali, Moulvi Abdullah Vakil, Mian Ahmad Yar was constituted to approach the minorities, such as Pandits and the Sikhs, so as to seek their support in the freedom struggle. While the leaders of the Pandit community remained antagonists of the freedom movement, Sardar Budh Singh one of the prominent leaders of the Sikh community established close relations with the leaders of the Muslim Conference.⁹

Repression

As the Government machinery was run by the non-Muslims, the recommendations of the Glancy Commission remained in abeyance. Even the orders passed by the Maharaja on the Report were kept a guarded secret by the authorities. Hence the Muslim Conference demanded that the recommendations of the Glancy Commission be carried out. Accordingly, vide his letter dated February 7, 1932, Sheikh Abdullah invited members of the Working committee of the Muslim Conference, to attend a meeting on March 5, 1932 to consider follow up action on the recommendations of the Glancy Commission. Colvin, the new Prime Minister of the State opened negotiations with the leaders of the Muslim Conference and assured them of speedy implementation of the Commission.¹⁰

While the Muslim Conference leaders started a campaign to educate the masses about the relevant recommendations of the Glancy Commission, the Government took measures to create a further division among the Muslims. It also thought of crushing Sheikh Abdullah. It utilized the Mir Waiz of Ahal-i-Hadis Sect to foment another religious trouble among the Muslims. In May, 1933, after a religious ceremony by the above Mir Waiz, a Sunni Muslim who was a prominent worker of the Muslim Conference was killed by Wahabi Muslims. Sheikh Sahib lead his *jinaza* procession throughout the city but the Police stopped it at several places. When the coffin reached Khanqah-i-Moula,

Sheikh Sahib spoke against the repression of the Police and asked the Government to redress the grievances of the Muslims and carry out the recommendations of the Glancy Commission. The Government had pre-planned every bone. On the 21st of May, 1933, the leaders of the Muslim Conference were arrested and it included Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, Khawaja Ghulam Nabi Gilkar and others.

On the next day, complete *hartal* was observed in the city and towns of the valley and many demonstrations were held. The police resorted to firings at Maisuma, Amirakadal and other places, resulting in deaths and injuries.

The Government of the Maharaja had planned to suppress the political activities of the Muslim Conference. But the other leaders of the Conference delivered speeches in the rural areas declaring that the arrest of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah was unjustified. The State Government had to bow before the resentment of the masses and had to release Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and other political leaders. A big public meeting was held at Hazuri Bagh, Srinagar, on the 15th August, 1933 in which address of welcome was presented to Sheikh Sahib declaring full faith in his leadership.

Mir Waiz Moulvi Yosuf Shah, who could not tolerate the emergence of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah as the sole leader of the masses, now thought of organising new political organization under his leadership. He condemned the Muslim Conference leaders as Ahmedis and founded the Azad Muslim Conference. This organization had the support of upper classes and traders among the Muslims. The net result was that the Muslims of valley instead of struggling for their rights, absorbed themselves in sectarian fights. Abandoning the real cause, the followers of both the Conferences made attacks on each other. The Government took sides and fished in the troubled waters in the garb of pacifying the Muslims. The masses got disgusted and the Muslim Conference began to lose ground. It was at this juncture, that the leadership realised its mistake in having alienated the support of the people. Hence the Muslim Conference decided to accelerate its activities. Having its base in Srinagar the Muslim Conference organized its branch office at Islamabad, Baramullah, Sopore, Tral, Shopian, and other towns.

Annual Session 1933

The second annual session of the Muslim Conference was held at Mirpore on 1st, 5th, 16th and 17th December, 1933 under the Presidentship of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah. He advised the Muslims to unite and asked the non-Muslims to support his movement for :

“the loss of rights is a loss to all, whether he is a Muslim or a non-Muslim. The Muslim Conference has fought for the right of the people and there is no discrimination between a Hindu or a Muslim. The proprietary rights, remission of taxes, freedom of press and platform, rights to organise associations and assembly have benefited all. As such

I appeal to the non-Muslims that they should stand shoulder to shoulder with us so as to take part in our struggle for the emancipation of the people, freedom of the nation from the degradation, poverty and slavery. Whereas our demands are not restricted to the Muslims only but are beneficial to all communities and individuals in the State, there is no reason as to why Hindus should not join their Muslim brothers in this national front."

It is evident that under the guidance of Sheikh Sahib from the very outset, the Muslim Conference and the movement abhorred communal politics.

Political Activities

With the attainment of the demands, regarding formation of associations, the other communities in the State began to organise themselves. The Kashmir Pandits who constituted 1.5 percent of the total population in the State, being highly educated had been the policy makers. They as a community are highly class-conscious and at the time of crisis unit like one man. Though persecuted in the past, they have displayed wonderful compactness. Such political persecutions have made them cunning, crafty and garrulous.¹¹ As such they hold a dominant position in the services of various Governments in the State.

The Pandits had founded an association called the Sanatana Dharma Youngman's Association in 1925. Now they changed it into the Sanatana Dharma Yuvik Sabha, with political aims, not against the absolute monarchy but in favour of the Hindu communalism. Serving as defenders of the Maharaja, they not only stood against progress but secretly manipulated the designs to divide the Muslims into various groups.

While the Muslim youth continued the Youngmen's Muslim Association, with Moulana Mohammad Sayed Masoodi, another association called the Anjuman Itihad-ul-Muslimeen was founded by Khawaja Ghulam Nabi Gilkar. The Dogras of Jammu also organised the Dogra Sabha and the Sikhs founded the Khalsa Dal. There occurred a spontaneous mushroom growth of political associations.

Agitation

The Youngmen's Muslim Association, which was affiliated to Muslim Conference, desired of the Government to fulfil its promises. During the period Sheikh Abdullah had gone to Sialkote, these Youngmen organised Demands Day in January, 1934. They demanded establishment of a people's Assembly and presented its memorial before the Government. An underground organization called "War Council" was established and posters against the Government started being pasted on electric poles and other places. Side by side various political leaders started delivering lectures against the Government, which imposed fines on the people, issued orders regarding externment of Mir Waiz Hamdani, Moulana Masoodi and others.¹² The other arrested leaders included Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, Saddur-ud-Din Mujahid, Mir Ghulam

Hussain Gilani, Khwaja Mohi-ud-Din Qara, Qureshi Mohammad Yousuf and Mir Waiz Hamdani. Hundred of the Muslim youngmen were arrested which created panic in the valley. Hartals, processions and protests continued and the Government started crushing the agitation with a strong hand. The Maharaja ordered imposition of punitive fines in the agitated areas. Every mohalla and locality was fined and properties of the political workers were auctioned. The Government also promulgated the 19-L Regulation and exiled the leaders of the Muslims. But all these repressive measures could not crush the agitation which spread to the rural areas also. The Police resorted to fire at Pulwama, Bijbehara, Hindwara, Badgham, and other places resulting in the deaths of a few dozen freedom fighters. Hundreds of the agitators suffered wounds and injuries. The Muslims living in Bijbehara suffered heavily due to official repression that they fled away from the village.¹³ Such unhuman acts of the Government added fuel to the fire and the political movement gained momentum. Every day a few youngman offered themselves for arrests after delivering speeches against the administration of the Maharaja. Sheikh Sahib, who was at Sialkot during those days convened a meeting of the Working Committee of the Muslim Conference on the 10th of February, 1934 at Sialkot to consider the political situation prevailing in the State. The exiled leaders as well as some who left the State boundaries in disguise participated in the meeting. The Committee nominated Chowdhary Ghulam Abbas as the Director to launch a strong movement against the Government. He came to Srinagar and after delivering a seditious speech against the Government was arrested along with other political workers. The arrest of Chowdhary Ghulam Abbas resulted in more disturbances, which spread to Jammu also. Colvin, the Prime Minister appointed many educated agitators in public services. He also promoted some of the Muslim officials whose posts also went to the Muslims. This gave a set back to the movement and difference arose among the leaders. The Government also announced in April, 1934 that the Legislature Assembly will be constituted very soon. Hence Sheikh Sahib reached Srinagar and asked the members of the Working Committee to concentrate on fighting the coming elections rather than wasting energies in continuing the agitation. His suggestion was accepted.

Franchise Committee

The Franchise Committee, which was appointed on the 31st of May, 1932 recommended that the State of Jammu and Kashmir should have a Legislature Assembly. It was decided that the Assembly will have 75 members on the following ratio :

Elected Muslim members	21
Elected Hindu members	10
Elected Sikh members	2
Nominated members	30

Ministers or officers	12
Councillors	10

The Maharaja constituted this Assembly on the 20th of January, 1934. Although Sheikh Sahib and other leaders were not prepared to join this sort of Assembly, yet on his advice, it was agreed to fight the elections so as to show that the Muslim Conference had the support of the majority community in the State. Despite the fact that the Government did not set free the arrested leaders, the Muslim Conference under the guidance of Sheikh Sahib decided to fight the elections. The Azad Muslim Conference of Mir Waiz also contested 5 seats from Srinagar. But despite all these hardships the Muslim Conference won all the 21 seats. The name of those elected were as under :

1. Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beg
2. Khawaja Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq
3. Syed Hussain Shah Jalali
4. Haji Ahmed Ullah Shahdad
5. Khawaja Ali Mohammad
6. Moulvi Abdullah Vakil
7. Khawaja Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din Khan
8. Khawaja Sona Ullah Shah
9. Khawaja Mohammad Akbar Dar
10. Khawaja Ghulam Hassan Malik
11. Mian Ahmed Yar Khan
12. S. Khan
13. Chowdhary Abdul Karim
14. Chowdhary Abudullah Khan
15. Sheikh Mohammad Amin
16. Col. Abdul Rehman Khan
17. Maj. Atta Mohammad
18. Mian Qurban Ahmad
19. Raja Marawat Khan
20. Khawaja Mohd. Shafi Shah

The first session of the Praja Sabha was held on the 17th of October, 1934 and it continued upto 2nd November, 1934 Mian Ahmad Yar Khan was nominated as the Party leader of the Muslim Conference in the Assembly.

For the inauguration of the first session of the newly constituted Praja Sabha, the Maharaja said in his proclamation :

“For our part we declare Divine Providence having laid upon us the sacred duty to care equally for all those committed to our guardianship, we can recognise no difference between one person and another or between one class and another. They are all our beloved children, whatever their persuasion or creed, and we desire to protect, foster, guide and

advance them by every means in our power. Out of the great love and affection we bear our beloved subjects, we have called upon you to do your part in working for the well being of this state”.¹⁴

Despite the above high sounding principles, the Praja Sabha was a powerless forum, where the elected members as well the nominated members could ask questions, move resolutions and discuss the budget. All important powers of the Government were reserved kept by the Maharaja under his control. In fact, the Executive was responsible to him and not to the Assembly. The constitution of the Praja Sabha could satisfy none.

Third Session

The third session of the Muslim Conference was held at Sopore on the 11th, 12th and 13th November, 1934, under the Presidentship of Mian Ahmed Yar Khan. He emphasised that it was necessary to unite all people, belonging to various communities, so that the aim of having a system of Government responsible to the people could be achieved.

After this session, Sheikh Sahib went to Jammu where Sardar Budh Singh, invited him to witness the pitiable condition of the non-Muslims in the Jammu region.

“I told him that the demand for the establishment of the Responsible Government is a national demand and not a sectarian demand. As such, rendering of help to every human being, uplift of the down trodden and fight against injustice should be the aim of every religious man. What is needed is to serve all people irrespective of caste, creed or colour and force them out from misery, degradation and poverty. When Sheikh Sahib saw the miserable plight of the Muslims and the non-Muslims, tears came to his eyes and he declared that he will stand for the sufferers and establish the National Conference.”¹⁵

It will be seen from the above the right from its inception, the political movement of the Muslims was directed against the Maharaja and not against any community. The majority community in the State, i.e. the Muslims and organised themselves into a political party named as the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference. The membership of the Conference was not open to any particular community but its aims included securing educational, economic, cultural and political uplift of the Muslims. On the day, the Conference was formerly inaugurated, its President invited the minorities to join the struggle for emancipation of the masses. He made a special appeal to the Pandit community of Kashmir to join hands with the Muslims in the freedom struggle. At the same time, the Muslim Conference constituted a Committee of 11 members to seek cooperation of constituted non-Muslims in the freedom movement. The example is unique and significant and has been appreciated as follows

"Sheikh Abdullah's nationalist outlook and his fight for the entire State's freedom endeared him to the masses. As his prestige and popularity grew, so did the popularity of the Muslim Conference, which though by nomenclature a communal organisation, could well be equated with any national body fighting for a country's liberation and for people's fundamental rights."

Fourth Session

The fourth session of the Muslim Conference was held at Srinagar on the 25th, 26th and 27th of October, 1935 under the Presidentship of Chowdhary Ghulam Abbas. He declared :

"The martyrdom of the Kashmiris had given us new life. Whatever has been achieved by us is due to the Muslim Conference and have succeeded to a great extent in our mission. Our movement is progressing and our success in future is assured.

"Any nation for that matter when any country rises to attain a special object, it will not rest until it obtains its mission.

The Government is aware about our point of view regarding the reforms. Our demands are the only way to pave way for better relations and understanding between the ruler and the ruled. As such appeal to the Ruler of the State to bestow, whatever he could on his subjects. Why to keep it pending, when it is evident that the people will keep their struggle alive, until they obtain their demands.

In the Assembly, the Government with the help of official members has opposed beneficial resolutions regarding reduction in land revenue and other measures useful to the public.

Forgetting the sad experience of the past I appeal to the non-Muslim brothers, in the name of the Muslim Conference, that they should join hands with us. I assure them that the Muslims do not want to usurp the just demands of the other nations; they aspire to obtain in justice for all.

Let all of us join to free our homeland.

During the same year Mr. Mohammad Ali Jinnah visited, Srinagar. An address of welcome was presented to him on behalf of the Muslim Conference. He advised them to obtain the support of the Non-Muslims in their struggle.

The State Assembly

The establishment of the State Assembly, officially known as the Praja Sabha had raised high hopes in the minds of the people. But the Government had intentionally composed it in such a way that the number of nominated and official members was double the size of the elected members. At the same time, the Government played one party against the other with the result that the assembly achieved nothing for the people. It could do nothing against the wishes of the Government, for it had limited powers. Any bill passed by the

Praja Sabha could be returned to it by the Prime Minister for reconsideration. All official bills despite being rejected by the Praja Sabha could become an Act if the Maharaja desired to do so. Further the Assembly had no powers to discuss the privy purse of the Maharaja, organisation and control of the State Army and the provision of the Constitution Act.

Having felt frustrated the elected representatives of the people protested several times but in vain. It was clear that the Maharaja's Government did not like the participation of the people in the administration of the State. While the Muslim representatives wanted to introduce progressive bills in the Assembly, the non-Muslim members baring a few opposed all such moves on the plea that if the Muslims are supported, it would mean the end of the rule of the Hindu Maharaja. As such, the Muslim Conference leaders accelerated their efforts to win over the non-Muslim masses. It was decided to organise public opinion in favour of an Assembly, which could work in the interests of the people of the State. A call for observing the Responsible Assembly Day was given and accordingly, 8th May, 1936 was observed throughout the State as the Responsible Assembly Day. Meetings were held in all the major towns of the State demanding that the Praja Sabha be made responsible to the people.

The lead to the united political movement was given by Sardar Budh Singh, who resigned from the Praja Sabha declaring it a toy Assembly. His example was followed by the elected Muslim members of the Assembly on the 27th November, 1936. Sheikh Sahib declared as under :—

"We have not demanded the Responsible Assembly and independent system of administration today but this demand was made at the time our movement was started and it has been our chief aim. Specially, when the constitution of the Legislative Assembly was being framed in 1934, the demand for a responsible assembly was raised from every nook and corner of the State.

For the last one and half year, the demand for better constitution is not the demand of the Muslim masses but other minorities have also demanded, in their own way, a better constitution.

We sincerely believe, that the poorer sections among the Hindu and the Sikh population will also struggle for the responsible system of Government, side by side with us. As such, we must continue our sincere efforts in this direction and carry our message to the Hindu and Sikh people of this State".

Fifth Session

The fifth session of the Muslim Conference was held at Poonch on the 14th of May, 1937 under the Presidentship of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah. The Conference demanded introduction of educational facilities for rural areas and establishment of a University in the State. It also demanded establishment of the Responsible Government of the people, for the people and by the people. In his presidential address, Sheikh Sahib declared :—

"We have demanded responsible assembly and independent administration from the beginning of the freedom struggle. Since the last year, the demand for a better constitution has not remained a demand of the Muslim majority population in the State, but we hope that poor among the Hindus and the Sikhs will also work shoulder to shoulder with us for the attainment of Responsible Government. We must sincerely continue our efforts in that direction, and bring it to the notice of the Hindu and the Sikh masses in the State. It is heartening to note that a party of Non-Muslims has emerged which wants to ameliorate the condition of the poor masses and those very people have extended support to the Muslims in demanding Responsible Government."¹⁶

Communal Outburst

While Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah had succeeded in gaining sympathy of the poorer sections of the Sikhs and Hindus, in his struggle, the Government considered it as challenge to the authority of the Maharaja. In order to sabotage the efforts of unity of the people against the autocratic rule, the Government engineered communal disturbances. The Hindus were led by communal leaders like Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya to start the agitation in Jammu known as the Cow Protection Agitation. The State High Court having reduced the sentence of 7 years imprisonment to 1 year in a case, where a Muslim had slaughtered his cow for eating purposes, the Hindu of Jammu staged a *hartal* and agitation under the leadership of Kaviraj Vishnu Gupta. The agitators demanded treating or cow slaughter by the Muslims as penal offence with 7 years imprisonment. The State Government had to bow before this communal demand.

In Kashmir Pandit Sheo Narayan the President of the Kashmiri Pandit Yuvik Sabha, in order to incite communal trouble declared that "the Hindu rever the cow in the same manner the Muslims rever Hazrat Mohammad".¹⁷ This was deliberate attempts to hurt the feelings of the Muslims, so that repressive measures could be unleashed on them. All these troubles were a part of the conspiracy hatched under the guidance of Gopalaswamy Ayengar.¹⁸ The Mir Waiz Moulvi Yosuf Shah led to protest procession in Srinagar on the 27th of June, 1937, which was *lathi* charged by the Police and nearly five hundred persons suffered severe injuries.¹⁹ At Bohri Kadal, Srinagar, the Military opened fire on the procession, resulting in the martyrdom of one youngman and injuries to others.²⁰ Many including the Mir Waiz were arrested. The newspaper *Islah*, which had published an article saying that cow-slaughter was permitted in Vedas, was back listed.

Sheikh Sahib and his other colleagues understood that all those communal troubles had a background and it was the State Government, which wanted communal agitations so as to divide the people. Shiv Narayan Fotedar apologised and declared that he stood for the Responsible Government. Due

to efforts of the Muslim Conference the communal feelings engineered by the Government were subsided.

The State Government having failed in Kashmir, engineered a communal trouble in Poonch. But Sheikh Sahib, in company of Sardar Budh Singh and Pandit Prem Nath Bazaz went to Poonch and subsided the trouble there. Such other troubles were engineered at Chikar, Mirpur and other places and the State Government after creating these incidents crushed the Muslims with a heavy hand. All these troubles were pre-planned and thus Gopalaswami Ayengar, succeeded in dividing the Hindus and the Muslims on the one hand and creation of various factions among the Muslims, notably among the followers of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and Mir Maiz Moulvi Yousuf Shah. Both the factions fought each other with the result that the Muslim Conference was at its death bed. At that moment Mirza Bashir-ud-din Mahmood Ahmad, the former President of All India Kashmir Committee advised the Muslims not to abolish their political organization, the Muslim Conference, but to enter into a compromise with the other communities living in State, for fixation of their community in case, relinquish their own organization.²¹

Sixth Session

The sixth session of the Muslim Conference was held under the presidency of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah at Jammu on the 25th, 26th and 27th of March, 1938. Sheikh Sahib declared :—

"We desire that we should be free to set our house in order and no foreign or internal autocratic power should interfere in our natural and human birth rights. This very demand is known as Responsible Government and for attainment of which we have dedicated our lives and we will achieve it at all costs. The first condition to achieve the Responsible Government is the participation all those people, who have been forced in various ways, by the present system of Government, to lead the miserable lives as slaves and poverty stricken slaves. Who are these people? They are not the Muslims alone nor the Hindus and the Sikhs alone; nor the untouchables or the Buddhists alone but all those who live in this state.

"Some Muslims erroneously think that all the 8 lakh non-Muslims living in the State lead a life of ease but they are mistaken. In reality, only a few thousand among them are prosperous while, all others, like you, have suffered immensely at the hands of an irresponsible Government and are also steeped low into deep ignorance, heavy tax in taxes and debts and starvation. We do not demand Responsible Government for 80 lakh Muslims but all the 100 percent State subjects. As such inviting the 20 percent Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and out castes to join the struggle is of utmost importance.

"Sooner or later, all these people will join with us against the forces that stand in the way of the achievement of our goal. In my opinion, for

building the national edifice, on sound lines, two things are necessary, which are a soul of democracy; firstly in all political and economic issues, we must cease of think in terms of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims and secondly, we must built a common national front, by universal suffrage on the basis of joint electorate”.

A proposal to change the name of the Muslim Conference into National Conference could not progress smoothly and as such was postponed.

National Conference

In May 1938 Khawaja Mohammad Umer Butt and Pandit R.N. Vishnavi founded the National Congress in the state. A few progressive workers joined it but it remained primarily located in Srinagar. By then, the field for the development of a nationalist movement had become clear. In the meanwhile Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah had gone to Lahore and developed intimate relations with the progressive nationalist leaders of the Panjab. He was staying with Mian Iftikhar-ud-Din, when Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru arrived at Lahore, setting out on a tour of the North West Frontier Province. Both of them had met for the first time and Sheikh Sahib became so fascinated with Pandit Nehru that he boarded his railway compartment and toured the whole of the North Western Frontier Province.²²

It was during the tour that Sheikh Sahib developed intimate relations with Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan. Both Pandit Nehru and Sheikh Sahib exchanged ideas on the national and State politics. Pandit Nehru suggested opening of membership of the Muslim Conference to the Non-Muslims so that the campaign against the ruler, could gain more strength.

Hindu Support to Muslim Conference

The secular role of the Muslim Conference and continuous appeals made by Sheikh Abdullah to the Hindus to join the freedom struggle, had its effect. Some prominent politicians among the non-Muslims came to the conclusion that it would be advantageous to the platform of the Muslim Conference for projecting the sufferings of the Hindu masses. Prominent among those who came forward were Sardar Budh Singh, Pandit Prem Nath Bazaz, Pandit Jia Lal Kilam, Pandit Rugh Nath Vishnavi, and Pandit Khyshap Bandhu. At the same time, some of the minor but secular organisations, like the Kashmir, Congress, Kashmir Youth League, Mazdoor Sabha etc. merged into the Muslim Conference. All these activities accelerated change of the Muslim Conference into the National Conference. Under the directions of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, a Committee was constituted to chalk out the political demand of all nationalities in the State.

The State Government, which disliked the unity of the people, accelerated its efforts to drive a wedge among the various communities. In Kashmir, the

Pandits were encouraged to put for fantastic demands such as equal representation in services with the majority population of the Muslims, permission to possess fire-arms and holding of the portfolios of law and order in the State, in their hands.²³

National Demand

The leaders of Muslim Conference Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, Maulana Mohammad Sayed, Khawaja Ghulam Monammad Sadiq, Mian Yar Ahmed, Mirza Afzal Beg and Ghulam Mohammad, Bakshi, alongwith five Hindus viz., Pandit Prem Nath Bazaz, Pandit Jia Lal Kilam, Pandit Kashyap Bandhu, Pandit Shyam Lal Saraf and Pandit Shambu Nath Peshin and one Sikh leader, Sardar Budh Singh compiled and published a Manifesto which is known as the National Demand. It runs as follows :—

“As is now well known, there is a nation-wide movement a foot among the people of Jammu and Kashmir State, to bring about a complete change in the social and political outlook of the people. This movement is not confined to any particular community or section of the public, but all classes of people have began participating in it, with the fullest consciousness of the issues it involves. But we, do make it perfectly clear at the very outset that our loyalty to His Highness's person and Throne is unserving and needs no reiteration.

The ultimate goal of this movement is the achievement of complete Responsible Government, under the aegis of His Highness the Maharaja Bahadur. But, as sponsors of this National Movement, we feel that it is our bounden duty to acquaint our countrymen as also others who are interested in it, of the immediate objective we have in view.

Our movement is essentially a movement of peace and goodwill. Immediately, it aims at securing the elementary and basic rights of citizenship. It shall certainly try to bring about such a State of affairs in this country as would make it possible for even the humblest subject of His Highness to contribute to the making of his own destiny. Our demands are modest, but they have the force of reason and justice behind them. Not that we are not conscious of our limitations, not that we are not fully aware of the fact the government knows its mind and has resources at its disposal to enforce its will. But, in the soul-stirring words of Pandit Moti Lal Nehru : However much we may be enfeebled in body, our soul have never been, nor will ever be, killed. Our movement has a gigantic urge behind it. It is the urge of hunger and starvation, which proposals it onwads in most adverse circumstances.

To ever growing menance of unemployment amongst our educated youngmen and also among the illiterate masses in the country, the incidence of numerous taxes, the burden of exorbitant land revenue, the appalling wast

of human life due to want of adequate modern medical assistance, the miserable plight of uncared for thousands of labourers outside the State boundaries and, in the face of all this the patronage that is being extended by the Government in the shape of subsidies and other amenities to outside capitalists, as also the top heavy administration that daily becomes heavier, point to only one direction, that the present conditions can never be better as long a change is not made in the basic principles that are underlying the present system of Government.

Our cause is both righteous, reasonable and just. We want to be the makers of our own destinies, and we want to shape the ends of things according to our choice, of course, under the august, patronage of His Highness. This we cannot do, so long as a healthy change is not effected in the present system of Government. We have also come to the conclusion that without a change, it is impossible for the communities individually or the country collectively to make progress. We are, therefore, of the firm belief that the Government of His Highness should before long be modelled on the following lines :—

- (a) the present system of administration in the State shall be replaced by Responsible Government, subject to the control and residuary powers of His Highness the Maharaja Bahadur as hereinafter mentioned.
- (b) The Ministry shall be responsible to the Jammu and Kashmir Legislature and shall have, subject to such responsibility, power to control the expenditure and the revenues of the State and also to make such grants and appropriations of any part of those revenues, or of any other property, which is at present under the control or disposal of the Council, as reserved expenditure, save and except the following, which shall remain under the control of His Highness the Maharaja Bahadur :
 1. Expenditure on the Military services;
 2. Expenditure closed as political and foreign;
 3. Payment of all debts and liabilities hitherto lawfully contracted incurred by His Highness in Council on account of the Government of Kashmir; and
 4. The Dharmarth Trust.
- (c) The principle of responsibility to the Legislature shall be introduced in all the branches of administration of the Government, subject to general control, reservation and residuary powers vested in His Highness in respect of control of military, foreign and political affairs etc. provided that the proposals of His Highness for appropriation for foreign or political purposes shall be submitted to

the vote of the Legislature, but that His Highness shall have power notwithstanding the vote of the Assembly, to appropriate upto a fixed maximum, any sum His Highness may consider necessary for such expenditure.

- (d) The Legislature shall consist entirely of members elected by constituencies formed on the system of adult franchise. Provision should be made for the representation of labour, trade, landlords and educational interests in the Legislature by means of elections.

The election to the Legislature shall be made on the basis of Joint Electorate. Seats should be reserved for the minorities and all other safeguards, and weightages should be guaranteed to them in the Constitution, for the protection of their legitimate linguistic religious, cultural, political and economic rights, according to the principles enunciated, accepted or acted upon by the Indian National Congress from time to time. In addition to the above, the religious rights and sentiments of all the communities should always be respected and not interfered with.

- (e) All the subjects of the State without distinction of caste and creed, shall be admitted for service in all areas of defence and for that purpose His Highness shall be assisted by a Minister responsible to the Assembly.
- (f) No subject of His Highness shall be liable to suffer in liberty, life, property or association and free speech or in respect of writing, except under sentence by an ordinary court of justice and as a result of lawful and open trial.

All this cannot be given for the mere asking. It requires wise statesmanship from the side of the Government. Our earnest desire is to avoid a strife. Let the Government make an announcement accepting the above principles and if His Highness's Government is pleased to discuss these principles with us, we shall certainly and whole heartedly cooperate for this purpose. We are sure that if this is done, there will reign peace all round".

Historical Interpretation

Excavations conducted at Burzhom reveal that the Kashmiris lived in caves, nearly five thousand years ago. The Nagas, the Pishachas and the Yakhshah were the earliest settlers in the valley, which became a meeting ground of many a civilizations and people. The Aryans, the Hindus and the Kushans are prominent among them. During those ancient times, the small groups of the Jews, the Persians, the Sycathians and the Greeks also settled in the region. It was in the first century A.D. that Kashmir became the proponent of the Mahayana Buddhism, which later spread into Tibet, Central Asia,

China and other countries. In the fifth century, the Kashmiris developed a unique philosophy known as the Kashmir Shaivism, which is humanistic in its content and synthesis of all spiritual disciplines. It was in the fourteenth century that the last Buddhist ruler of Kashmir Gyalpo Rinchina became a Muslim along with his co-religionists. The net result was the creation of a blended culture which is Semite Buddhist, Shaivist, Hindu and Islamic at the same time. This composite culture of the people of Kashmir has kept them away from any tinge of communalism and they have solved their day to day problems in the light of their past heritage. It was in the logic of things, therefore, that from its inception, the Muslim Conference aspired to bring the fruits of their political struggle to the reach of all. Since 1931, the Muslims had been making persisting appeals to the Hindus to join the common struggle for the achievement of fundamental rights and civil liberties.²⁴

In early 1938, the Working Committee of the Muslim Conference recommended to the General Body that :

“the time had come for mustering all progressive elements, standing for the achievement of Responsible Government, under a common flag, and that steps be taken by constitutional amendments to change the name of the organisation so that all people who are desirous of participating in the political struggle may be able to join the Conference without distinction of caste, colour, creed and race.”

Thus a special session was convened on the 10th and 11th June, 1939, under the Presidentship of Khawaja Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq, to get this resolution ratified by the mass of the Conference members. The President said :

“This day will be written in gold letters in the history of the rational awakening of Jammu and Kashmir. The decision which you are going to take is not being watched only by the Kashmir Government but by the whole of India”.²⁵

Foreseeing thoughts were expressed by the Chairman of the Reception Committee, Moulana Mohammad Syeed :

“with high courage you have traversed long distances with only one motive that the chains of slavery, which have made the people of heavenly Kashmir, the dwellers of virtual hell, may be cut. . . truly enough you have come to lay the foundation of new Kashmir”.²⁶

It was on 28th June, 1938, that the Working Committee of the Muslim Conference, met at Srinagar to discuss the issue regarding opening of doors of the Conference to every one “irrespective of caste, creed and belief”.

Sheikh Abdullah moved the following resolution :

“whereas in the opinion of the Working Committee the time has now come when all the progressive forces in the country should be rallied under one banner to fight for the achievement of responsible government, the Working Committee recommends to the General Council that in the forthcoming session of the Conference the name and constitution of the organization be so altered and amended that all such people who desire to participate in this political struggle may easily become members of the Conference irrespective of their caste, creed or religion.”

Some members of the Working Committee of the Muslim Conference, notably, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad and Afzal Beg opposed this resolution, but the Sheikh's advocacy carried the day and the resolution changing the name of the Muslim Conference into National Conference was adopted.²⁷

After heated discussions, the Working Committee passed the following resolution :

“whereas in the opinion of the Working Committee the time has now come when all the progressive forces in the country should be called under one banner to fight for the achievement of responsible Government, the Working Committee recommends to the General Council that in the forthcoming annual session of the Conference, the name and constitution of the organisation be so altered and amended that all such people who desire to participate in this political struggle, may easily become members of the Conference irrespective of caste, creed or religion”.

Responsible Government Day

The Maharaja felt uneasy at this new trend of events in the politics of the State. His main aim had been to divide the people so that he could rule over them. It was but natural for him to look with disfavour about the aspirations of the people. His Government had all along tried to sow seeds of dissension among all the communities and used them against each other. The Muslim masses, who had spearheaded the struggle were now divided but Sheikh Sahib had instead obtained support of the non-communal Hindus and Sikhs. It was decided to observe the Responsible Government Day on the 5th of August, 1938. On this day in response to the call of the leaders, many mass meetings were held in various parts of the State.

The following resolution was passed in over 500 meetings all over the State on the 5th August, 1938 :

“This mass meeting of the people places on record its complete repudiation of the present system of irresponsible Government, and wishes to express its faith in the establishment of complete responsible Government

which alone can cure the ills of the people. Therefore this gathering appeals to all patriotic persons to muster under the banner of freedom and to be prepared for the coming struggle for liberty. The victory of that struggles alone would usher in a period of complete political, economic and social emancipation".

The Maharaja set into motion his machinery of repression. Section 144 banning processions and meetings was promulgated and the leaders were warned not to carry on their political activities against the Government, which demanded securities for good behaviour from Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, Sardar Budh Singh, Khawaja Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq and Maulana Mohammad Sayed Masoodi. It was a foolish act to ask the political leaders not to deliver speeches and the people were not ready for this nonsense.

Repression

The Muslim Conference, now decided to proclaim the National Demand in a public meeting. Hearing this, the State Government imposed Section 144 of the Penal Code and prohibited holding of meetings within the Municipal limits or Srinagar. As such, the Muslim Conference held a public meeting in the Hazratbal complex on 28th August, 1938 under the Presidentship of Pandit Kashyapbandhu. The meeting was addressed among others by Sardar Budh Singh and Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah. Next day, a public meeting was held at Amirakadal in defiance of the imposed ban, under the Presidentship of Sardar Budh Singh. Before the closure of the meeting, the stage was encircled by the Police, which made arrests, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, Sardar Budh Singh, Pandit Kashyapbandhu, Khawaja Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq, Moulana Masoodi and a young boy aged 12 years, namely Ali Mohammad Tariq was arrested and interned in the Badamibagh Military Cantonment.²⁸ Chowdhary Ghulam Abbas, who delivered speech at Baramulla was also arrested. Gopalaswami Ayengar, who happened to be the Prime Minister of the Maharaja, let loose a reign of terror on the people. Besides arresting political workers, the Government started arresting their relatives also. All Government servants were warned of dismissal, if it came to light that any of their relative was a political worker. Ayengar was so ruthless in his repression the hundreds of innocent people were thrown in jails. A young man named Rajab Dar jumped on the car of Ayyengar but was injured and admitted in the hospital.²⁹

The arrests of the leaders added fuel to the fire and complete hartal was observed in various towns of the valley. Protest meetings and demonstrations were held at different places, in which seditious slogans were raised.

The Government of the Maharaja let loose severest repression. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and six other leaders arrested with him, were tried for sedition and sentenced. The Police dispersed various processions with the use of force all resorted to lathi charge on several occasions and many suffered

injuries. The masses resorted to the pelting of stones and there occurred many clashes with the Police forces. Hundreds of the agitators were put into prisons.

At Anant-nag three leaders were arrested including Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beg.³⁰ Hundreds of the political workers were fined or imprisoned. It was a national struggle in which leaders from all the communities living in the State participated and suffered. The Government of the Maharaja got perturbed and issued a warning to the Kashmiri Pandits that if their relations were found participating in political activities their services would be terminated. Mr. Gopalaswami Ayengar introduced the system of hostages by which relations of the political worker were arrested in case the particular person was not traced. The net result of this system was that hundreds of innocent people were put behind bars.³¹ During this period the All India States People's Conference established its branch at Srinagar and took active part in the politics of the State. Mahatama Gandhi appealed for discontinuance of the agitation.

State People's Conference 1939

The All India State People's Conference held its session at Ludhiana on 15th-17th February, 1939, under the Presidentship of Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru. It was a historic session in which representatives from every State in India participated. All leaders except Sheikh Abdullah and Pandit Kashyap Bondhu were released by the Government. Out of the released leaders, 34 member delegations went to the Conference.

The Kashmiri leaders informed the delegates about the National Demand which was termed as a progressive and secular programme to be followed by other people in various States in India. The Conference was told that the Government of the Maharaja had not released Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah simply to prevent him from attending the session at Ludhiana. They also informed the delegates about the merciless repression and untold suffering of the people under the rule of the Maharaja. Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru informed the delegates that the people of the State, under the leadership of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah desired Responsible Government, Sheikh Abdullah had not been allowed to participate in the deliberations of the Conference. "But such scheming of the State Government cannot continue for long. If by keeping Sheikh Abdullah the State Government thinks it can hide facts about what is happening in Kashmir, they are sadly mistaken".

The Conference adopted the Responsible Government demand for all States. This was a signal victory of the people of Kashmir in India.

The Kashmir leaders reached Srinagar jubilant over their success for they had now obtained the moral support of the All India State People's Conference. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah was released on the 24th of February, 1939 from the Kathua jail. He was taken in a procession to Pather Masjid, where thousands of people heard him,

National Conference Session, Tripura

In February, 1939 Sheikh Sahib led a delegation to the annual session of the All India National Congress at Tripura. He was accompanied by Pandit Kashap Bandhu, Pandit Prem Nath Bazaz, Maulana Mohammad Sayed Masoodi and Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad. In this way, the State leaders established their contacts with the foremost nationalist political organisation in the country. Here at the session, the Kashmir leaders got a chance to meet personally and discuss their problem with big leaders such as Babu Rajindra Prashad, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Dr. Syed Mehmood, Sardar Patel and others including Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru and Mr. Jai Prakash Narayan. In one of the meetings, Maulana Masoodi declared :

“the Chamber of Princes, which is composed of the Rajas and the Nawabs in India has united to suppress the eight crore people living in the Indian states. It is, naturally, the duty of these eight crore people to unite and demand Responsible Government from the princes”.

After the Conference, the Kashmiri leaders visited Bombay and other places, so as to acquaint people about the secular demands of people of Jammu and Kashmir State.

National Conference

The names of the Conference was changed into the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference on 11th June, 1939.

It was due to the advice of the Indian National Congress that the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference was converted into the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference.³² Those who did not like the move separated and organised themselves in various groups. In the Valley, some of them, Mr. M.A. Saber, Ghazi Aman-ullah Khan, Khawaja Ghulam Nabi, Mirza Ghulam Mohi-ud-din, Mr. Abdul Aziz Mirpuri and others organised meetings and raised the slogan of “Islam in danger.” They even did not hesitate to level charges of corruption on Sheikh Abdullah and stated that he had been purchased by Hindus. Some among the educated Muslim youth, even established a branch of the State Muslim League under the Presidentship of Syed Asiq Hussain. On the other hand, Khawaja, Sadar-ud-din Mujahid organised another party known as “Youngmen’s Muslim Association” to fight the Muslim League, the Azad Muslim Conference and such other groups and forums which were anti-Sheikh Abdullah or anti-National Conference. Both the sides depended on muscle strength and fought each other and made themselves a miserable sight before the non-Muslims. Even a party of Muslim Youngmen, under the command of Qureshi Mohammad Yousaf attacked Mujahid Manzil, which had now become the headquarters of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference. It was evident that the Muslims had divided themselves into opposite camps and were fighting internecine wars.³³

It was in 1940 that Moulvi Yusuf Shah, the Mair Waiz of Kashmir thought of entering active politics after two years slumber. His reputation had suffered due to his acceptance of a jagir amounting to Rs. 600 from the Maharaja and the Kashmiri Muslims considered him a traitor to their cause. But being the Mir Waiz, he had a devoted group of followers in the centre of Srinagar. Under his directions, Qureshi Mohammad Yousaf declared revival of the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference in May, 1940. Seeing danger to its existence, the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference organised itself to face the insurgents. For this purpose a force of young volunteers was organised under Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, who was designated as Salar-i-Azam or the Commander-in-Chief. This force let loose its volunteers to use muscle force and thrash the members of the Muslim Conference, who were mainly followers of the Mir Waiz. It is interesting to note that the State Government did not interfere in these group fightings between the two political parties, rather it encouraged both of them. While the para-troopers of the National Conference were known as Sher or lion, the para-troopers of the Muslim Conference were nick-named as Bakra or goat. Skrimishes, fights, battles and enmity between the Sher and the Bakra groups have continued even upto 1983.

Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference

With the advent of the Indian Muslim League, the splinter groups of the anti-Abdullah forum tried again and again to revive the old Muslim Conference. But such groups never gained any importance in the Valley of Kashmir. However, when Chowdhary Ghulam Abbas left the National Conference, he succeeded in reviving the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference in the Jammu region. For his advocacy of the Muslim cause, he was nominated as a Member of the All India States Muslim League. He toured Poonch, Rajauri, Mirpur and Bhadrawah and succeeded in eliminating the influence of the National Conference from the Muslim masses. After some time, he was asked to spread his activities in the Valley of Kashmir also. He agreed to do it provided Mir Waiz Moulvi Yusuf Shah agrees to relinquish the jagir of Rs. 600 granted to him by the Maharaja. On the 15th of June, 1941 a big gathering assembled in the Jamia Masjid, Srinagar. Chowdhary Ghulam Abbas invited the Kashmiri Muslim to rally under the banner of the Muslim Conference. He also asked the Mir Waiz to relinquish the above mentioned jagir, which he did stating that he had accepted it as an academic award from the Maharaja. In the meeting, Chowdhary Ghulam Abbas was elected as President and Qureshi Mohammad Yousaf as General Secretary of the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference.³⁴ The following were nominated as members of the Working Committee :

1. Hakim Qudrat Ullah
2. Khawaja Abdul Gaffar Ahangar
3. Khawaja Mohammad Ismail Sagar

4. Mr. Allah Rakha Sagar
5. Sheikh Ahmad Din Banihali
6. Sheikh Mohammad Amin
7. Chowdhari Abdullah Bhatti
8. Chowdhri Hamid Ullah
9. Mr. Mohammad Aslam
10. Khawaja Abdul Ghani
11. Pir Zia-ud-din Poonchi
12. Khawaja Zia-ud-din Watarhali

It cannot be denied that the new Muslim Conference became a popular organisation among the Muslims of the Jammu region but in Kashmir, it failed to attract much following. The reason behind the success of Chowdhary Ghulam Abbas was that in the Jammu Region, all Hindus stood behind the Maharaja and they did not look favourably towards Sheikh Abdullah. Despite the fact that now he was the President of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference. Secondly, proximity of Jammu nearer to the Panjab, made it more prone to Hindu communalism. In the Jammu region, the Hindu Rajiya Sabha, which aimed at the Hindu supremacy, had the blessing of the Maharaja and his kith and kin. It was but natural for the Jammu Hindus to be suspicious of Sheikh Abdullah, for he was the person who had awakened the Muslims of Kashmir after many centuries of slumber. Hence the politics of the Jammu region continued progressing on communal lines; the Hindus demanding Hindu raj over Northern India and the Muslims demanding Muslim raj or Pakistan. In such a situation, the Maharaja and his agents approached Chowdhary Ghulam Abbas and requested him to abandon the slogan of Pakistan.³⁵

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Jammu and Kashmir National Conference

“It is really a revolution and no body can stop it”

—G.M. Sadiq

Freedom movement in Jammu and Kashmir has its origin in the widespread discontentment among the people in general and the majority community in particular. The persecution of the Muslims during the Dogra rule, the Begar or forced labour, high taxes, denial of opportunities of services in the State, confiscation of mosques for use as military stables and godowns, denial of proprietary rights to the Muslims of Kashmir and many such atrocities on them ignited the struggle by the Muslims against the Hindu Maharaja. This movement was spearheaded by the Muslims alone and the Hindu subjects of the Maharaja in general and the Pandit community in Kashmir took the side of the Maharaja and opposed this struggle. In such a historical context this movement superficially appeared to be communal but in reality it was not so in its character. It was a revolt of the suffering masses against autocracy and misrule of the Maharaja who was a stooge of the British imperialism. In this context it was a progressive movement. It is for this reason that Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, who led this struggle for freedom in 1931 invited all Kashmiris, irrespective of their religion, to join hands and fight the alien masters. A time came when the progressive elements in the Pandit community realized that the movement expressed the inner feelings of the masses against tyranny. Many among the non-Muslims came forward to join it with the result that the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference was converted into the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference and its membership was thrown open to all communities living in the Jammu and Kashmir State. The new President of the newly constituted body, G.M. Sadiq declared that this day will be termed as a red letter day in the national struggle. But the things were moving in the wrong directions among the Muslim leaders while the majority favoured the birth of the National Conference, the minority opposed it. They held meeting through the State denouncing the rechristening of the Muslim Conference into National Conference. Some of the Muslims youth levelled charges against Sheikh Abdullah of betraying the cause of the Muslims. Some editors among the

Muslims press became hostile and spread rumours against Sheikh Sahib that had become a follower of the Congress. Some youngmen went to the extent of the forming a local branch of the Indian Muslim League. Some of the extremists even attacked the headquarters of the National Conference at Mujahid Manzil on the 15th June, 1939. The whole atmosphere became tense and various factors among the Muslims started fighting with each other and many clashes occurred between the rival groups. All sorts of slanders were spread against the aims of the National Conference. In this whole show, the propaganda machinery of the Government utilized the services of the communal elements like the Kashmiri Pandit Youth Sabha. The Prime Minister of the Maharaja Gopalasawamy Ayyengar utilised every opportunity to engineer communal trouble between the Muslims and the non-Muslims on the one hand and among the Shia Muslims and the Sunni Muslims on the other hand.

But all this mischievous propaganda and dirty tricks could not shake the confidence of the people in the leadership of Sheikh Abdulla and the National Conference continued to hold sway over the majority of Muslims in the State. It goes to the credit of Chowdhary Ghulam Abass Khan to counteract the propaganda of the extremists against the National Conference. In a statement to the press he declared :

“On this occasion, I wish to declare the those, who have are the torch bearers of the political awakening in this State for the last nine or ten years, are trusted politicians and have successfully completed many stages. It must be borne in mind that they are fully capable of understanding our domestic problems and solving them in a satisfactory manner. And they are in no way prepared to sacrifice their independent attitude at the alter of any outside organisation. In the case of the freedom of our native land we have full confidence on our own resources and power.

We are Kashmiris and we aspire to build a united front of all the communities against the present irresponsible Government of the Maharaja, we wish that for the down trodden and suffering people, there should be established an administrative system which would be responsible to the people.

Whatever has happened during the last ten years, is the result of the efforts of the Muslims and their struggle will continue upto that time until they achieve their object. As such, they should not be misled by the activities of the communal lists like before, nor they should become victims of the policy of divide and rule which is prevalent these days. I assure them that the cry of ‘Islam in danger’ has no substance.”¹

Islamabad Session 1939

The annual session of the National Conference began at Sarnal, Islamabad in Kashmir on the 3 September, 1939. It was for the first time that leaders of

various communities started a joint struggle against autocracy. Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beg, the President of the Reception Committee declared :

“Sarnal is the main source of water to spring which irrigates the whole district. It is good that from the platform and stage will flow the Ganges of freedom which will satiate the forty lakh people of the State”.

“The first session of the National Conference being of historical importance, its Presidentship needed to be placed in the hands of the personality whose figure is also historical. In the considered opinion of the house, it can be only Sher-i-Kashmir Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah whose, sacrifices, wisdom and statesmanship has opened a new chapter in the history of this State and who had led the politics of the State on the right lines, for which his name will always shine on the political horizon.

Accordingly, a second chapter was added to the freedom struggle in Kashmir. The National Conference became a party of peasants, workers and the down trodden and thus assumed the shape of the peoples party. The Government now had to face the struggle of the combined people.

In his presidential address Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah while congratulating the Muslims, the Hindus and the Sikhs for joining their hands in the freedom struggle from a common platform, said :

“We wish unity of purpose among all the sufferers, irrespective of their creeds, for we know that the usurper will never take the side of the sufferers. All our sufferings are the result of the prevailing irresponsible Government and our sufferings will come to an end with the achievement of the responsible sort of administration.

We are proud that among the people of 561 States in India, our State subjects have prepared a new formula for responsible government, which has become popular in other states also”.

He referred to the native princes and in these words :

“the political consciousness of the people living in the States proves that they refuse to live as down-trodden, uncared for and suffering people, but want to be masters of their own fate. The princes who claim that the State subjects are not fit for reforms, suffer from infelicity complex.

“The proposed Federal Scheme introduced by the British after the 1935 Act, considers the people living in the State as animals and as such this Scheme is being put into force against their wishes, simply to bind them into slavery”.

In this Session, several resolutions were adopted, the most important being the ratification of the National Demand. The other resolution pertained to the appreciation of the intentions underlying the statement issued by the Indian

National Congress against the policy of the British towards the political aspiration of the Indian people. It was also decided that the flag of the National Conference would be of red colour with a white plough in the centre; red colour depicting revolution and the plough depicting the peasants of the State, who form a majority. Before the closing of the Session, Sheikh Sahib declared the names of the new Working Committee as under :

1. Chowdhary Abdullah Bhali
2. Chowdhary Ghulam Abbas Khan
3. Khawaja Ghulam Ahmad Butt
4. Khawaja Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq
5. Maulana Mohammad Sayed Masoodi
6. Mian Ahmad Yar Khan
7. Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beg
8. Pandit Jia Lal Kilam
9. Pandit Kashap Bandu
10. Pandit Prem Nath Bazaz
11. Raja Mohammad Akbar Khan
12. Sardar Budh Singh
13. Sardar Mohinder Singh

Gopalaswami Ayengar

The Maharaja appointed Diwan Bahadur N. Gopalaswamy Ayengar as the Prime Minister of the Jammu and Kashmir State on the 7th April, 1937. He had been trained in the British bureaucracy and was among the most successful I.C.S. men. As the British wanted to keep their own men at the helm of affairs in the States, he was nominated for the post by the Viceroy of India.² He was orthodox to the extreme and even could not tolerate the sight of a dog. On his first interview, when he met the Maharaja at his palace, he struck the favourite dog of the Maharaja with his cane and left the chamber, declaring that he being a Brahman will not tolerate such profane pets. He would, after taking morning bath spend a few hours in reciting holy scriptures and would not take food except from the hands of a Brahman. From the outset, he started the policy of divide and rule and created many problems for the people. For this purpose, he made many innovations and was the chief architect of Muslim and anti-Muslim enmity. Hardly a month after his taking over, he instigated the leaders of the Hindu Sikh Naujawan Sabha, Jammu to organise an agitation, known as Cow Agitation. The movement created repercussions not only in Jammu but outside the State as well. There occurred many clashes in Jammu between Hindus and the Police but no one died. It was all pre-planned and the leaders were arrested. The net result was that the whole atmosphere became tense with communal feelings. Having acted in Jammu he waited for such an opportunity in Kashmir.

In August, 1939, when the Pandit community at Srinagar declared Durganag temple as a trust, the office bearers of the Dogra Dharmarth Trust wanted to occupy the temple forcibly. The Pandits of Srinagar staged a protest march. Ayengar had hoped of a communal trouble between the Pandits and the Muslims of Srinagar but contrary to his expectations Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah declared his full support to the Pandit community and warned the Maharaja not to interfere in the religious affair of the Pandits.

The Gun Worship

Under his guidance, the Maharaja promulgated the Arms Act, 1940 by which only the Hindu Rajputs of the State could keep guns and fire arms, depriving all other communities from keeping guns. Naturally, the other communities staged protest meetings. The Government of the Maharaja came with a press note declaring that :

“the gun worship is prevalent among the Hindu Rajputs and placing legal restrictions on any thing used in religious ceremonies is interference in religion. On this sound plea, the Hindu Rajputs of Jammu will be permitted to keep guns, fire arms and gun powder without any licence”.³

The excuse of gun-worship was an innovations of Ayengar in order to hood wink the public opinion. It was evident that he wanted to arm the Jammu Hindus in the name of religion and deprive the Muslims from such a concession.

The Devanagri Script

Mr. Ayengar suggested to the Maharaja that Devnagri script be introduced in the State. By this innovation he wanted to draw a further vedge between the Muslims and Hindus. At the same time he wanted to prove to the Muslims who were in majority in the State that it was a Hindu State under the rulership of the Hindu Maharaja. In order to impose his scheme in a scientific way, he appointed a Committee under the Chairmanship of Zakir Hussain and asked it to submit it report regarding introduction of the Persian and the *Devanagri* script in the State. But contrary to his expectations, the Committee rejected the idea of introduction two scripts. Ignoring the verdict of the Committee he issued the following orders :

1. The common language could be easy Urdu, but for the purpose of reading and writing, both the *Devanagri* and Persian script be given equal status. The books which are used for various subjects, should be the same but he printed in the aforesaid two scripts.
2. In those schools, where the number of the students opting for both the scripts be as far as the required number or the possibility of having a fixed number of students, there it would be necessary for the

teachers to know both the scripts. The minimum number of students shall be 15% of the total enrolled students.

3. It shall be necessary for the school teachers to know both the scripts. If they do not know one of the two scripts, it will be their duty to learn the other scripts to a satisfactory standard within one year. Henceforth, no one will be appointed in the aforesaid schools until he is acquainted with both the scripts.

The above scheme envisaged that the Muslim would prefer the Persian script and the Hindus would opt for the *Devanagri* script, thus resulting in creating not only administrative difficulty but at the same place an hindrance in the development of common nationalism as well as Kashmiri language and culture.

Attitude of the National Conference

The leaders of the National Conference were alive to the game being played by Mr. Ayengar. Sardar Budh Singh, the President of the National Conference wrote many letters to the Prime Minister for discussion of the issues but Ayengar asked his Chief Secretary, Pandit R.C. Kak to hoodwink the Conference leaders. The National Conference leaders mobilised public opinion against the communal moves of the Government of the Maharaja maintaining the following position on the above mentioned issues :

- (a) The National Conference is of sincere opinion that the present Arms Act, will result in creating rivalry and bitterness among the various sections of the State subjects. This unjust distinction has already created suspicions among the various communities.
- (b) The National Conference feels that the orders of the Government regarding instruction of two scripts will result in dividing the Hindus and the Muslims in two different groups.

A meeting of the Working Committee of the National Conference held at Mirpur on the 28th of December, 1939, passed a resolution strongly resenting the exclusion of the recognised court language of the State.

The controversy regarding the state language further complicated the political atmosphere in Kashmir. The National Conference showed its inclination towards adopting of Hindustani, written both in Persian and *Devanagri* scripts. This gave a handle to the extremists among the Muslims, who turned hostile to Sheikh Abdullah and the National Conference.⁴

The Pakistani Scheme

The All India Muslim League held its annual session at Lahore on the 21st of March, 1940, under the Presidentship of Qaid-i-Azam, Mohammad Ali

Jinnah. The Muslim League, started in 1906 as cultural organisation had developed as political party with a large membership of the Muslim intellectuals and upper classes. While the All India Congress believed in the unity of India, the League did not believe in the oneness of the Indian nation. To the Qaid-i-Azam the Hindu and the Muslim differences were of fundamental character.⁵ In short it was a question about one nation or two nations. The British Government played both the parties against each other and created, what is known as the Hindu Muslim problem. In order to divide the Indians, the British introduced the system of separate Hindu and Muslim electorates and laid foundations for the subsequent two nation theory. The Qaid-i-Azam gave vent to his feelings as under :

“It is extremely difficult to appreciate why our Hindu friends fail to understand the real nature of Islam and Hinduism. They are not religious in the strict sense of the word but are, infact, different and distinct social orders, and it is dream that the Hindus and Muslims can ever evolve a common nationality, and this misconception of one Indian nation has gone for beyond the limits and is the cause of most of our troubles and will lead India to destruction if we fail to revise our notions in time. The Hindus and Muslims belong to two different religious philosophies, social customs, literatures. They neither inter-marry nor interdine and, indeed, they belong to two different civilizations which are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions.”⁶

Accordingly, under his influence, the Muslim League demanded for the Muslims living in India not only an independent but also a separate country to be known as Pakistan. In a resolution, it demanded that north-western regions and eastern regions of India, which constitute the Muslim majority areas be united into independent States.

Simultaneously, on the model of the Indian States Peoples Conference, the Muslim League also established the All India States Muslim League to as to interfere into the politics of the States in India. The Muslim League gave its full support to the Muslim Conference in the State and Chowdhary Ghulam Abbas was taken into the Working Committee of the States Muslim League from the Jammu and Kashmir State.

Pandit Nehru and Kashmir

Pandit Nehru had visited the valley of Kashmir several times and travelled from one end to the other end of the State. He had remarked :

“And the more I have seen, and marvelled at the beauties of its hills and its vallies, its gardens and its orchards, its lakes and its rivers, the more appalled have I been at the unspeakable poverty of its people, condemned to live in squalor and ignorance, while their ruler wastes

millions in breeding horses for the Mahalaxmi race course, building palaces in Bombay and New Delhi, and spreading the fame of Mr. ‘A’ in the gay capitals of Europe”.

After Ludhiana session of the States People’s Conference, both Pandit Nehru and Sheikh Abdullah had come nearer to each other. Both of them believed passionately in the struggle for freedom of the masses from the slavery of the British and the Indian prices. It was during one of their meetings at Lahore that Sheikh Sahib extended an invitation to Pandit Nehru to visit Kashmir as a guest of the National Conference. Accordingly, Pandit ji accompanied by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the leader of the Red Shirt Movement and others visited Kashmir. On the 29th May, 1940, he was received at Muzafarabad by Mian Ahmad Yar Khan, Master Abdul Aziz and other leaders of the National Conference. The Indian leaders were received by the public at many stations on their way to Srinagar. Due to heavy schedule of reception and meetings, they could not reach Srinagar on that day. On the 30th May, 1940, the members of the Reception Committee, including Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah received the guests at Baramulla, from which place, the leaders were brought to Srinagar in a procession. At Chattabal, Srinagar. Pandit Nehru and other guests were taken in a boat procession on the river Jehlum. The whole populace of the city on both sides of the river banks greeted them with greetings and slogans. At Zaina Kadal, the Muslim Conference workers resorted to pelting of stones, and shouted anti-Nehru slogans and danced naked. But the Maharaja’s Government exhibited a diplomatic silence over this hooliganism. Next day a mammoth meeting was held in the Hazuri Bagh, Srinagar, to commemorate the visit of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and other distinguished leaders of the Indian National Congress. In his welcome address, Sheikh Abdullah declared that in Jawaharlal, the Kashmiris were greeting the “illustrious son of Kashmir”. He declared further :

“Our movement has been misrepresented by the interested elements and even some of the newspapers from outside Kahsmir have been carrying out venomous propaganda against us. Our progress has been thrawtled and there are some elements still engaged in activities against us. We are fortunate that you, as the torch bearer of India’s freedom and progress are within us. Your honour can see for yourself as to what kind of movement has been started by us in Khasmir and whom we represent”.

Pandit Nehru, in his reply asked the people to continue their struggle. He told the audience that the States in India cannot remain aloaf from India. There could not be the Muslim raj or Hindu raj in India and whatever Government would be formed, it would be the Government of the Indian people.

Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan also spoke in the meeting and said :

"I saw the people here. In such a beautiful land the people, men, women and children, wear old and torn-out clothes or are naked. They suffer due to poverty. I am happy that you have risen. If Pandit ji belongs to your native land, I am your neighbour. Looking at your enthusiasm, I feel that the future of India is bright. Revolution is coming and it demands a price from nations and this price is sacrifice".

Pandit Nehru and his colleagues toured the valley for ten days and everywhere they were shown utmost cordiality and hospitality. At the time of departure Pandit ji issued a statement reiterating that he was not a foreigner to the valley of Kashmir, but had visited his motherland several times in the past. He declared that after witnessing the enthusiasm of the people, he was sure that the time was near when a Responsible Government will be formed in Kashmir for the betterment of the people. He appealed to the Kashmiri Pandits to change their attitude towards the National Conference and join the new trends.

As Pandit Nehru had advocated a democratic set up of administration of the people and for the people, the majority of the Kashmiri Pandits and the Hindus of the Jammu region showed uneasiness and felt bitter. At the same time, other orthodox elements among the Muslims felt sure that Sheikh Sahib had completely associated himself with the National Congress, which they considered as anti-Muslim, postures. They also felt aggrieved that Sheikh Sahib had accepted Pandit Nehru as his political guru.⁷

Pandit Nehru's visit of the valley produced tremendous demonstration of public enthusiasm. They felt that they were not alone in their struggle against the Maharaja and the whole of India was at their back. Secondly, his visit accelerated polarisation of political forces into two different camps of the nationalists or the anti-nationalists. Chowdhary Ghulam Abbas Khan carried a vigorous propaganda against the National Conference in the name of Islam but failed to get any foothold in the valley. The National Conference, under the leadership of Pandit Nehru's visit to Kashmir had rehabilitated the prestige of the National Conference among the Pandits of Kashmir. Sheikh Abdullah had emerged as a towering personality and his image held a stronger position among the political leaders. At the same time, he became popular among the masses.

Baramulla Session

The annual session of the Jammu & Kashmir National Conference was held at Baramulla on the 27th, 28th and 29th of September, 1940, under the Presidentship of Sardar Budh Singh.

In March 1942, Stafford Cripps visited India, containing proposals from the Home Government about the grant of independence to India after the

termination of war. These proposals were rejected by the Congress as well as by the Muslim League. As the proposals contained nothing about the people living in the Indian States, the National Conference gave a protest call by observing a State People's Day, which demanded Responsible Government in all States.

The liquidation of the British from India meant the liquidation of the Princely States also. Hari Singh, like other Maharaja would not accept liquidation.

He stated :

"In promising to support the proposals brought by Sir Stafford Cripps, the Chamber of Princes added the proviso that the support should be without prejudice to the right of individual States to lay their case before him and generally without prejudice to the inherent rights of the States".

Hari Singh felt frightened at the prospect of the division of India on the basis of religion, for in that case, his State had been marked for inclusion in the Muslim dominated dominion. In a statement about the Cripps Mission, the Maharaja said

"In any case, it is the duty of the Princes to show themselves as the equals nationals anywhere in the world.

Freedom must be our watchword : freedom from crippling restrictions and strangling control, freedom from the subordination of India's interests to the interests of other parts of the Commonwealth".⁸

Although invitations had been issued to the national leaders for participation but none could attend this session due to abnormal political conditions prevailing in the British India at the moment.

In this session, many important issues like the Hindu-Muslim question, communal trends in politics, representation in services and establishment of Responsible Government in the State was discussed.

Sheikh Abdullah reiterated the demand of the Responsible Government for the State. A resolution moved by Pandit P.N. Bazaz to the effect that "the land belongs to the tiller of that land" was passed with a majority vote. Another resolution moved by Sofi Mohammad Akbar to the effect that "all debts which have been cleared by the poor but still continue due to the compound interest and high rates be declared null and void" was also passed.

National Conference Meeting : 1942

The Working Committee of the National Conference in its meetings held in Jammu on the 14th, 15th and 16th January, 1942, under the Presidentship of Sardar Budh Singh, noted with deep concern the aggravating war situation.

accompanied by the deepening food crisis in Kashmir. It demanded from the State Government a closer association of popular democratic elements in ensuring equitable efficient and incorruptible distribution of food grains and rations among the people. It also sounded a note of serious warning to the Government to be aware of the impending danger of Japanese invasion which was fast approaching the borders of India.⁹

While commenting on the above, Sheikh Sahib said that "Hari Singh has advised the other Indian Princes to go on repeating the word : freedom, till it becomes their habit of speech, but it is unfortunate that while the Maharaja expresses pious feelings about the independence of India, he is silent about his autocratic rule, under which his people groan and are leading miserable lives." Chowdhary Ghulam Abbas expressed same views when he said that the Maharaja should give practical shape to his pious view by granting complete Responsible Government to his subjects.

Muslim Conference, 1942

The revival of the Muslim Conference was brought about by Chowdhary Ghulam Abbas in 1941, with the support of the Mir-Waiz and other political opponents of Sheikh Sahib. While the Chowdhary stood for the Muslim League ideals, the Sheikh stood for the ideals of the National Congress. The Muslims in the valley felt bewildered and fought with each other, even on Id days. The first session of the revived Muslim Conference was held at Jammu on the 9th of February, 1942, under the Presidentship of Chowdhary Ghulam Abbas. He declared :

"On the occasion of the visit of Sir Stafford Cripps in India, speaking on behalf of the 32 lakh Muslims of the State, I am amazed to see that while he has permitted the rulers of the States to present their point of view, he has not permitted the people living in these states to explain their difficulties. Any sensible person cannot admit for a moment that the rulers could have any right to speak on behalf of their subjects. No permanent political solution can be obtained, while ignoring one third population of India living in the States and the people cannot be satisfied until they obtain complete Responsible Government".¹⁰

Starvation

It was in the mid of 1942 that scarcity conditions prevailed in the State. The peasants walked from the villages into the streets of Srinagar carrying the bodies of their fellows who had died of hunger. In the villages, in towns and even in the capital cities, the shadow of approaching famine stalked among the homes of the people. The State Government failed to check the price of food grains. It was against this background of suffering and slow starvation that the National Conference convened the Food Conference on the 10th of May, 1942.

Delegates from the seven tehsils of the valley and the city of Srinagar participated. They decided that the scarcity of food and fuel was not solely due to shortage, but the responsibility for it lay partly on the inefficiency of a corrupt administration, and partly on the *jagirdars*, hoarders, profiteers and black-marketers. Panic was increasing due to the grave war news. All this constituted a serious menace to the very existence of the people.

Among other things, this Conference demanded from the Government the acquisition of grain stocks from *jagirdars* and merchants, the purchase by the State of standing crops, the introduction of rationing and control, the opening of State depots, the rigid regulation and control of fuel storage and distribution.¹¹

Communist Influence in Kashmir

It cannot be denied that history and culture of the Valley of Kashmir has derived much from the Central Asian countries. Its trade relations with those countries are centuries old and it was due to this reason that Russia several times thought of invading India through Kashmir. After the establishment of the Soviet Government in Russia, the then British Government in India took special steps to stop, what they termed as "Bolshivic literature and ideas and accordingly a strict watch ordered to be kept on the entry of the Communists in the State.¹² All political activity, even the formation of societies was banned and it was ordered that the germs of mischievous political ideas should be immediately nipped in the bud.¹³ It was but natural that the suffering masses of Kashmir looked with favour a revolution in Russia, which promised much for the poor. But, the British set in motion a propaganda machinery depicting the Socialistic revolution in Russia as anti-religious act. Indeed, the 1931 revolution in Kashmir was termed by some as an offshoot of the happenings in Central Asian regions. Most of the political leaders in the valley obtained inspiration from progressive elements in the Panjab. The Communist leaders of Lahore, greatly influenced the thinking of the Kashmiri leaders. It was in 1929, that Faiz Ahmad Paracha, a prominent Indian Communist settled in Kashmir. Pandit Radhay Nath Koul, another Communist came to Kashmir in 1931 and he organised a small study group here at Srinagar. K. Mohammad Ashraf, the famous Communist theorist came to Srinagar in 1937 and started his activities among the youth with the help of M.A. Farouqi. The Communist movement in Jammu was lead by Dhanwantri, with the result that trade union movement was organised in the State. Prominent members of the group were G.M. Sadiq, P.N. Jalali, Peer Yahya Siddiqi, J.N. Zutshi, D.P. Dhar, and Harnam Singh. They all joined the National Conference and influenced its activities. In 1940, Miss Mehmooda Ahmed Ali Shah, and Pandit Niranjan Nath started a regular campaign to win over supporters for communist activities. A party was found at the time Fazal Elahi Qurban came to Srinagar and Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad became its District Secretary, but later he was expelled for his anti-party

activities. Among others, he had the support of Mohamad Yousaf Dhar, Moti Lal Misri, Mohamad Yousaf Dar and O.N. Dhar.¹⁴ Both the groups though antagonist to each other worked in the National Conference and tried to influence its thinking. It cannot be denied that in shaping the policies of the National Conference, the Communists played a vital role from 1938 to 1950.

Cripps had offered division of the British India on communal lines. As regards the States, he had left free the Indian Princes to join the future dominions or have direct relationship with the British Crown. It is clear that the people living in the Indian States were taken for granted and nothing was visualised about their self-government. Accordingly, the Working Committee of the National Congress passed the following resolution :

“The complete ignoring of ninety million of people in the Indian States and their treatment as commodities at the disposal of their rulers, is a negation both of democracy and self-determination”.¹⁵

National Conference and Cripps

As soon as it came to light that the Cripps proposals had ignored the rights of the ninety million people living in the Princely India, the National Conference activated itself. Various State Parja Mandals and Organisations were contacted and mobilised to raise their voice against the Princes. The State Peoples Conference declared to observe the 19th of April, 1942 as the “States Demand Day”. The National Conference held its public meeting in Hazuri Bagh, Srinagar on the 20th April, 1942. It was presided over by Sardar Budh Singh, the President of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference. It was resolved :

“The rulers have no right to represent the people of the Indian States but this rights vested in their accepted recognised leaders and organisations. It will be the duty of the State subjects to fight against that Constitution which does not recognise distinction between the State and the non-state in basic matters. The people of the States will not be bound to those treaties which are a hindrance to their freedom and progress. The ninety million people living in the States in India are not bound to those treaties and engagements which have been entered into by the Indian Princes with the East India Company”.¹⁶

National and International Situation

The Working Committee of the National Conference met on the 16th, 17th and 18th of May, 1942 to discuss the national and international situation. In a statement to the press, it declared :

“The Working Committee regrets deeply the present attitude of the British War Cabinet towards the problems of the British India. The recent

hesitant step taken by the British Government in the shape of the Cripps Scheme in which the downtrodden millions of people living in the Indian States were entirely left out of the picture, lends support to the Indian States Peoples apprehensions that the British Government does not mean business. The very fact that refuge was and is being taken under the very absurd argument of treaties which subsist between the British Crown and some of the Indian princes makes it amply clear that the British Government is not prepared to recognize the rights and even the very existence of the State's peoples. Such policy instead of solving the problem has only complicated it”.¹⁷

Quit India Movement and Kashmir

In its resolution passed at Bardoli on the 30th of December, 1941, the Congress Working Committee expressed disappointment at the then British Government in India towards India but reiterated its sympathies with the people who were fighting for their freedom. It also expressed its helplessness to offer voluntary help against imperialism or fascism due its being under the British. It also terminated the individual *satyagraha* campaign and reaffirmed its participation in the British war efforts if India's independence was recognised. After the failure of the Cripps Mission to bring about reconciliation between the viewpoints of the National Congress and the Muslim League, Mahatama Gandhi began to think of launching a mass movement in the country. The Congress Working Committee's resolution of 14th July, 1942 demanded immediate grant of independence and threatened civil disobedience if it was not forthcoming. This resolution was put before the Congress Committee at Bombay on the 7th of August, 1942 by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. It demanded withdrawal of the British from India and vesting of leadership in Mahatama Gandhi to conduct a non-violent mass movement in case the demand is not accepted. The leaders continued discussions on the resolution and finally passed it on the 8th of August, 1942. In his concluding speech, Mahatama Gandhi called on all Indians to feel free. He asked the Princes in India to act as trustees of their people, and not to autocrats.¹⁸

The Quit India movement was the last and undoubtedly, the bitterest fight for freedom ever waged against the British in India. It spread over almost all the provinces spontaneously and resulted in complete breakdown of law and order and setting up of parallel independent governments in many parts of India. According to Nehru's *Discovery of India*, the figure of the martyrs would vary between four thousand to ten thousand souls.¹⁹

The arrests of the leaders of the Congress and subsequent killings created great resentment among the Kashmiris and its dismal shadows started hovering across the Kashmir horizon. Immediate hartal followed in the capital city of Srinagar and a big mass meeting was addressed by Sheikh Abdullah, the President of the National Conference. While declaring the demand of the Indian

people for independence to be their immediate birth right, and stressing the fundamental and consistent anti-fascist attitude and policy of the Indian National Congress, he exposed and condemned the provocative action of British Imperialism in arresting the leaders. He exhorted the Kashmir people to face the stern calmly, to remain unprovoked, and to held fast to the policies of the National Conference which were guiding their struggle for freedom.²⁰

The lead given by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah was followed by the Working Committee. The National Conference in its meeting held on the 16th August, 1942 passed the following resolution :—

“The Working Committee of the All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference has considered the resolution of the Indian National Congress in which the Congress Working Committee and the A.I.C.C. have demanded immediate independence. It has also considered the arrest of Mahatama Gandhi, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and other Congress leaders and the events following.

It is the decided opinion of the Working Committee that, if the Indian Government had not precipitated matters by arresting the leaders of the Indian National Congress on the 9th of August, the chance did exist of the situation improving. The Congress would have sent its adopted resolution and demand to the British Government, and the Governments of the Allied countries, and watched their reactions. Mahatama Gandhiji himself had also decided to meet the Viceroy and explain the demand and its object. It is obvious that, if the arrests had not begun, then the chances of a via media were bright, following which the clash between the Congress and the Government would have been averted. But the unstatesman like and precipitate policy of the Government made the situation worse.

Under these circumstances, the Working Committee of the National Conference emphatically demands of the British Government the immediate release of Gandhi and other Congress leaders, and other prisoners, and the ending of the policy of repression which by bringing the situation to the normal will create an atmosphere of peace and confidence in which the establishment of complete independence and National Government in India may be given a practical shape. Thus, India in its capacity as a free and powerful democracy may be able to participate in the people's war front and extricate for all times the Fascist powers, successfully ridding the world of this evil”.

Through its above resolution, the National Conference gave correct guidance to the people. It declared that the demands of the National Congress were genuine. While condemning the then British Government in India, it demanded immediate release of the national leaders.²¹

The events of 9th August and after, therefore, came as a profound shock to the National Conference. Arrests of the Congress leaders at this critical time and the policy of ruthless repression that followed, show, if it shows anything, the utter bankruptcy of the British statesmanship and political wisdom. At a time when all the resources of people and the Government should have been together to fight the onslaught of the accursed fascism, that the Government should have started quarrelling with its own people is a misfortune, the disastrous consequences of which are too patent. We know of no country in the history of the world which to the unfortunate and unwise path of fanning the flames of discontent among its own people at a time when ruthless enemy is at their very door.²²

During the following period, no trace of hope appeared in the Indian sky. The darkest hours of the people were during the time of Mahatamaji's fast in the Agha Khan Palace in 1943. With his release the first streaks of light were visible. Subsequently, the National Conference workers mobilised mass meetings at Srinagar, Jammu and other important towns of the State. It felt that it was the bounded duty of every patriot to bring his full weight to bear upon the then British Government in India, to call a halt to the policy of repression. In order to give support to the National Congress, the National Conference gave a call of total hartal in the State. Accordingly, a procession was lead by the National Conference leaders on the 23rd August, 1942 and a mass meeting was held in Srinagar. Sheikh Abdullah, Sardar Budh Singh and other leaders expressed their full sympathy with the people living under the British raj.²³

It requires to be noted that the activities of the National Conference in the State created an atmosphere of uneasiness for the Government of the Maharaja, which incited the Mir-Waiz to take cujals with Sheikh Abdullah. Accordingly, he started a vilification propaganda by declaring that “the Muslims were forced to bow before the flag of cow and plough”. It was a clear instigation against the National Conference who were termed as ‘Kafirs’ by him. Sheikh Abdullah could not tolerate such insinuations against his organisation, asked his workers to defend themselves. Thus skirmishes and fights started between the workers of the National Conference and the Muslim Conference and other communal elements.

Mirpur Session

On the 9-10th April, 1943, annual session of the National Conference was held at Mirpur under the Presidentship of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah. In his address, he exposed the tricks of the British imperialism, which had divided the Indians to perpetuate its rule. He declared as under :—

“As Muslims, we must believe that India is our home. We have been born out of its earth and we will go to the same earth. Our blood is mixed with every particle of this earth. India is our motherland and it will

remain our motherland. It is our duty to free our motherland and our homes from the slavery of the foreigners”.

Sheikh Sahib appealed for unity and said that those who declared that the “religion is in danger”, are villy persons serving the cause of the British for their personal ends. After the session, the following five principles of conduct were formulated for the workers of the National Conference :

1. popularisation of the National Conference in the State,
2. as Indians it is our duty to obtain deliverance from foreign rule,
3. mitigation of the effects of the war by self-help,
5. keeping the moral of the people high,
5. furtherance of the unity of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs.

Famine of 1943

In the middle of 1943, the Jammu & Kashmir State witnessed a sever famine, which affected the Jammu region very badly. The people in distress starting eating rabbish which resulted in the spread of epidemic. Hundreds of people died of famine and plague. In order to give vent to their resentment, all political parties including the National Conference, the Muslim Conference, the Hindu Rajiya Sabha decided to start protest meetings and processions with effect from the 22nd August, 1943. In Jammu, on the 25th of August, 1943, the State Police fired on a procession resulting in the death of 5 Hindu, 2 Muslim and 2 Sikh processionists. The city was handed over to the military and the people took the corps of the martyrs to a common place, where the Muslims were burried and the Hindu and Sikh martyrs were cremated. This was a significant event in the history of Jammu which showed a glorious example of Hindu-Muslim unity.

In order to support the demands of the people of the Jammu region and in sympathy with the martyrs, many processions and meetings were held in the Kashmir region.

Royal Commission

Due to its progressive outlook and revolutionary policies, the Jammu & Kashmir National Conference had eastablished its base in the masses. Its leadership had worked hard to educate people politically and make them conscious of their rights. The World War II was in full swing and the people in the British India under the leadership of Mahatama Gandhi had plunged into a bitter struggle for freedom. All these factors added to create an agitative atmosphere in Kashmir also, where even ordinary people could visualise that the days of the autocratic rulers like the Maharajas, the Nawabs and the Princes were numbered. Maharaja Hari Singh could not remain aloaf from such alarms and in order to divert the attention of the people instituted the

Royal Commission, under the Presidentship of Sir Ganga Nath, Chief Justice of Jammu & Kashmir. It was composed of 20 members, all nominated, out of which, only 3 could to termed as Public representatives and the rest as pensioners, *jagirdars* and reactionary elements. In spite of the fact that the Commission was for the most part packed with vested interests and *jagirdars*, the Working Committee as an experiment authorised its members, Mr. M.A. Beg and G.M. Sadiq, to attend and report developments to the National Conference. Soon it came to light that the main aim of the Commission was to safe guard the rule of the Maharaja and his dynasty after the withdrawal of the British from India. The terms of reference of this Commission envisaged fixing of status and position of the Maharaja under the following heads :

- (a) The rights, privileges and the position of His Highness the Maharaja and his dynasty.
- (b) Status of His Highness as a ruler and his duties.
- (c) Defence of the Jammu and Kashmir State.
- (d) Rights and duties of *Jagirdars*.

The Commission had its value, in so far as it showed the willingness of the Government to enquire into the abuses which rided State administration, but in its day-to-day Working it proved unsatisfactory, and ultimately the National Conference called upon its members to resign early in 1944.²⁴

“Naya Kashmir” Manifesto

The “Naya Kashmir” manifesto is a political document, containing aims and objectives of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference, with respect to the future constitutional, framewark, economic planning, agricultural and industrial growth and socio-educational uplift of the State. This manifesto remains the political “bible” of the National Conference till all the objectives contained in it are not fulfilled.

“Naya Kashmir” manifesto was presented by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah before the open session of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference at Srinagar on the 30th of December, 1944. In his introduction of the “Naya Kashmir” manifesto, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah writes as under :

“Progress is a continuous struggle—a tempestuous struggle. This struggle is not a child’s play. History has witnessed many tyrants and their tyrannies but every generation has achieved progress with the help of far-sighted thinkers and the sacrifice of Mujahids, and today we inherit and protect this torch of light. The National Conference has been fighting the battle since the inception of the freedom movement. The struggle had continued but it should have a definite future programme. The genesis of the struggle everywhere was the same; it is the struggle of the poor

against the class of exploiters. This struggle of ours is the struggle of the workers against those stone-hearted exploiters who as a class of discriminators have lost the sense of humanism”.

The preamble of the “Naya Kashmir” manifesto reads as under :

“We, the people of Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh, Frontier Districts, illagas of Poonch, Chinani, commonly known as the residents of the Jammu & Kashmir State, in order to perfect our union in the atmosphere of full equality and self-determination; to raise ourselves and our children, for ever, from the abyss of oppression, poverty, ignorance, degradation and superstition of the dark ago into the sunlit valley of peace and plenty ruled by freedom, science and honest toil; to participate in the historic resurgence of the people of the East and the working masses of the world; and destined to make our this dear homeland Kashmir, a dazzling diamond on the snowy forehead of Asia; do hereby propose, propound and endorse the following Constitution of our State”.²⁵

The “Naya Kashmir” proposes constitution in which

1. A single citizenship is established for all citizens of Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh and the Frontier Regions, including the Poonch and Chinani ilaqas. The equality of the rights of all citizens, irrespective of their nationality religion, race or birth, in all spheres of national life economic, political, cultural and social shall be an irrevocable law.
2. Freedom of conscience and of worship shall be guaranteed for all citizens.
3. In conformity with the interests of the people, for the purpose of promoting political awakening and strengthening the national resurgence, all citizens shall be guaranteed by law ;

- Freedom of speech
- Freedom of the press
- Freedom of assembly and meetings
- Freedom of street processions and demonstrations

4. In conformity with the interests of the people and for the purpose of developing self-expression through the organization and political activity of the masses of the pople, all citizens shall be ensured the right of combining in public organisations : trade unions, co-operative societies, women’s and youth organizations, sport and self-defence organizations, political parties, and cultural, scientific and technical societies.

5. Inviolability of the person shall be ensured to all citizens.

6. The privacy of the homes and secrecy of correspondence of citizens shall not be violated except in accordance with law.
7. The defence of the Motherland is the supreme and sacred duty of all citizens. Treason to the Motherland-violation of oath, desertion to enemies of the Motherland, impairing the military power of the State, espionage shall be punishable with the full severity of the Law and the gravest crime. Universal compulsory military service shall be established by law.
8. All citizens have the right to work, subject to a basic minimum and maximum wage established by law. In the absence of the provision of employment, citizens are entitled to security of the necessities of decent existence for themselves and their families by universal social insurance.
9. All citizens shall have the right to rest.
10. All citizens shall have the right to material security in old age as well as in the event of sickness and loss of capacity to work.
11. All citizens shall have the right to education.
12. Women citizens shall be accorded equal rights with men in all fields of national life : economic, cultural, political, and in the state services.
13. All children born in the State shall be ensured equality of opportunity irrespective of accidents of birth and parentage.
14. All citizens shall be secured protection by the laws and resource to the courts through administration of justice which shall be quick, cheap, and impartial.
15. The right of personal property of citizens, as well as the right of inheritance of personal property of citizens, is protected by law within the limits of the planned economy of the State.
16. Work in the State of Jammu and Kashmir shall be an obligation and a matter of honour to all citizens capable of work.
17. The State of Jammu and Kashmir shall grant the right of asylum to foreign citizens persecuted for defending the interests of the masses, for their scientific activity, or for their struggle for national liberation.

The ‘Naya Kashmir’ manifesto proposes the establishment of the National Assembly on the following lines :

The highest legislature of the State, National Assembly, shall be elected by citizens of the State by electoral districts on the basis of one deputy per 40,000 population, for a period of five years.

The jurisdiction of the National Assembly shall include :

- (a) representation of the State in exterior relations, conclusion and ratification of treaties with other states;

- (b) approval of alterations of the boundaries of the State;
- (c) organisation of the Defence of the State and the direction of its armed forces;
- (d) foreign trade upon the basis of State monopoly;
- (e) protection of State security;
- (f) establishment of the National Economic Plan of the State;
- (g) approval of the State Budget;
- (h) administration of banks; industrial and agricultural establishments and enterprises as well as trading enterprises;
- (i) administration of transport and means of communication;
- (j) regulation of currency and the direction of the monetary credit system;
- (k) organisation of State insurance;
- (l) contracting and granting loans;
- (m) establishment of the fundamental principles for the use of land as well as the exploitation of deposits, forests and waters;
- (n) establishment of the fundamental principles in the field of education and protection of public life;
- (o) organisation of a unified system of national economic accounting;
- (p) establishment of the principles of labour laws;
- (q) laws on the citizenship of the State and the rights of foreigners;
- (r) legislation on legal procedure, court establishments, criminal and civil codes;
- (s) organisation and control of the radio broadcasting system;
- (t) legislation for the protection and development of nationalities;
- (u) organisation for an archaeological survey; legislation for the protection and rehabilitation of monuments;
- (v) legislation in furtherance of this constitution, upon all aspects of national life.

Deputies to the National Assembly as well as to the People's Panchayats shall be selected by the electors upon the basis of universal equal direct suffrage by secret ballot.

Every deputy shall be obliged to render from time to time a report to his constituency regarding his work and the work of the body to which he was elected, he may at any time would be recalled by his constituency in the manner established by law.

The "Naya Kashmir" manifesto envisages the constitution of the Council of Ministers on the following basis :—

The Council of Ministers of the State shall be responsible to the National Assembly. Ministers of the State shall direct the branches of the State administration which come within the jurisdiction of the National Assembly. Ministers of the State shall issue within the jurisdiction of their respective departments

orders and instructions on the basis and in fulfilment of existing laws, as well as of decisions and orders of the Council of Ministers, and verify their execution.

The organs of State power in Districts, Tehsils, Cities and Villages, shall be the People's Panchayats. The People's Panchayats shall direct the activities of the organs of administration subordinated to them, ensure the maintenance of State order, observance of laws and the protection of the rights of citizens, direct local economic and cultural development in fulfilment of the National Plan and the local Budget.

The People's Panchayats shall adopt decisions and issue orders within the limits of the powers vested in them by law.

The "Naya Kashmir" manifesto includes the Charter of Women which guarantees the following rights to them :

1. Right to vote and contest elections.
2. Right to be consulted on all legislation or decisions with regard to women.
3. Right to employment.
4. Establishment of a department to look into their grievances.
5. Right to equal pay for equal work along with men.
6. Right to choose any profession.
7. Right to insurance of all kinds.
8. Right to absence from work at night.
9. Right to lighter work-load during maternity.
10. Right to perform the duties of motherhood.
11. Maternity aid and care.
12. Hospitalization during confinement.
13. Post-delivery treatment and care.
14. District-wise institutes for training nurses.
15. Maternity leave on full-pay six months before and six months after delivery.
16. Nursery schools attached to all factories and industrial complexes, where more than seven women work.
17. Right to half an hour's break for a mother who has to nurse a child.
18. Mother having more children would have the right to a family allowance.
19. Legal protection (free legal advice and defence).
20. Abolition of immoral traffic.
21. A woman's right to choose her husband.
22. Abolition of the dowry system and immoral traffic.
23. Right to divorce.
24. Right to sustenance allowance for feeding children in case of divorce.
25. Right to decent treatment for a woman under detention.
26. Right to free education; mobile schools for boat women and Gujar ladies.

27. Special scholarships for technical education.
28. Segregated education system for women, except when they choose co-education.
29. Right of participation in meetings of bodies which frame courses for study.
30. Provision for the 3 R's to all adult women.
31. Encouragement to women for scholastic pursuits.
32. Participation of women in cultural and literary activities.
33. Their participation in the development of the mother tongue; and
34. Their cultural renaissance.²⁶

The "Naya Kashmir" manifesto proposes to establish a National Education Council, vested with the task of preparing schemes for the development and improvement of education on the following guidelines :

1. Establishment of a national university.
2. Organizing of research.
3. Provision for technical education.
4. Establishment of a statistical institute.
5. Establishment of industrial institutes.
6. Establishment of a State Institute to provide knowledge, about their own culture, language and history to the people of the State.
7. Establishment of one college in each district.
8. Establishment of nursery, primary, secondary, high and higher secondary schools.
9. Mother tongue to be the medium of education in all schools.
10. Establishment of a network of libraries.
11. Propagation of 'Basic Education', and
12. Provision of facilities to women for all kinds of education.²⁷

The "Naya Kashmir" manifesto envisages the establishment of an organization for cultural and social uplift. It lays down that in order to encourage a common and composite culture in the State, it is imperative to establish a Cultural and Social Council with the following programme :

1. Establishment of a radio station.
2. Establishment of a National Film Industry.
3. Institution of sports clubs and stadiums.
4. Opening of recreation clubs.
5. Protection of archives and ancient monuments, and
6. Establishment of an organization to preserve art and culture.

According to the "Naya Kashmir" manifesto of the National Conference, one of the fundamental duties of the State is to look after the health of all its

citizens. In order to achieve this objective a National Health Council is to be established. It has to act according to the following guidelines :

1. Every fifteen hundred citizens should have one doctor.
1. Every village should have one doctor and one first-aid centre.
3. Every district is to have one Indoor Patient Hospital, under the supervision of provincial hospitals.
4. Doctors, hakeems, nurses, compounders, medical assistants and related personnel would be trained in the State Medical College.
5. Eradication of diseases.
6. Educating people about matters connected with hygiene and sanitation.
7. Maternity aid for women.
8. Children's health to be looked after.
9. Medical research on modern scientific lines.
10. Encouraging Unani and Ayurvedic systems of medicine.
11. Promotion of sports and physical culture.
12. Training of women for medical professions.
13. Ambulances for people living in far-flung areas, and
14. Village and city sanitation.²⁸

The "Naya Kashmir" manifesto envisages the establishment of a National Communication Council, for improvement of transportation on the following lines :

1. Connecting of Jammu and Srinagar cities with other cities, towns and villages in the State.
2. Connecting a village with its surrounding areas.
3. Rivers, lakes and other waterways to have the most modern water transport system.
4. Bridges of vital importance would be constructed.
5. Travellers and visitors to have adequate travel facilities.
6. Adequate arrangement of buses.
7. Adequate arrangement for the carriage of goods and transport for hilly areas.

The "Naya Kashmir" manifesto envisages establishment of an Agricultural Council for agricultural planning of the State. The object of agricultural planning would be the creation of congenial conditions for self-sufficiency in food in the State. The following measures have been proposed to achieve the above ends :

1. Establishment of an organisation to facilitate agricultural planning.
2. Provision of hybrid seeds to the peasants.

3. Establishment of drug research laboratories, and growing of herbs required in them.
4. Improvement of available cultivable land by supplying fertilisers.
5. Stepping up of agricultural research.
6. Cultivation of fallow land and its transfer in the name of cultivators preferably the land is intended to be distributed on the basis of the commune system.
7. Improving cattle-breeding.
8. Improvement of the living conditions of the Gujjar community.
9. Improvement in fruit industry and canning and supply of insecticides and pesticides.
10. Encouragement of bee-keeping industry.
11. Encouraging silk industry.
12. Development of fisheries.
13. Provision of timber to the peasantry and improvement, of grazing lands.²⁹

The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference claims that its objective is to create a classless society in which every individual shall have complete right to develop himself and enjoy a good standard of living by eradicating all means of exploitation and providing equal opportunities for all. It wants the State of Jammu and Kashmir to have everything within democracy and in accordance with planned economy. The State Planning Commission would aim at greater production, improvement in the standard of life and creation of capacity for national defence. For this purpose, production, consumption, commerce and revenue is to be controlled on cooperative basis. The representatives of the people have to determine guidelines for future economic and social development of the State. The main aim of economic planning is to bring forth such a social order, in which equality prevails in all walks of life.³⁰

The objectives of the economic planning are laid down in the "Naya Kashmir" manifesto as under :

1. National self-sufficiency, for the economic betterment of the people of Kashmir.
2. Improvement in the standard of living within the framework of reconstruction programme. The standard being the same for all, it would not only be applicable to necessities of life like food, housing and shelter but to all matters relating to public service.

On the basis of a planned economic system, the National Conference seeks to ensure :

1. Employment to all adult citizens.
2. Right to work according to the capacity of the individual (both physical and mental).

3. Right to life and protection for children.
4. Respect for women in the context of their domestic, and social life.
5. Removal of exploitation on the basis of superiority of intellect.³¹

In conformity with the Indian National Planning, the National Conference envisages to adopt measures and methods which would assure a decent standard of life for all its citizens, irrespective of caste, colour or creed. Accordingly, it is the duty of the State to ensure a decent standard of living by providing :

- (a) Nutrition; a suitable diet—with full complement of vitamins of two thousand and four calorific units.
- (b) Residential quarters, suitable for both winter and summer seasons. Each citizen is to be provided with a hundred square feet of living space, whether resident in village or in town.
- (c) Proper clothing: thirty yards of cloth for each citizen yearly, plus woollen clothes for winter.
- (d) Water supply: easy availability of clean drinking water of 25 gallons per consumer per day.
- (e) Lighting, adequate for a family in respect of cooking and heating.
- (f) Education for all as planned.
- (g) One hotel and restaurant for every thousand persons, with all possible amenities.
- (h) All areas (Villages, towns, cities and hill areas) to be linked with the State capitals with telephonic and telegraph systems.
- (i) Insurance of a comprehensive nature for all citizens.
- (j) One bank for every twenty thousand people, and
- (k) Free medical aid.³²

The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference declares to bring about a green revolution in the State by introducing the most modern methods of agriculture, cattle and sheep breeding, poultry and dairy farming. The "Naya Kashmir" manifesto advocates socialisation of all instruments of production and reorganization of property relationships. It declares that the land belongs to the tiller and the landlord has no right over the land or the peasant. Declaring the State as an agricultural country, it believes in :

- (a) abolition of Chakdari and absentee landlordism,
- (b) distribution of all lands among the peasantry,
- (c) farming and marketing of agricultural produce through cooperatives,
- (d) prohibition on export of foodgrains,
- (e) vesting control of forests in panchayats.

The rights of the peasants and tillers of lands guaranteed by the "Naya Kashmir" manifesto, are listed below :

1. Right to piece of land, or in its absence, some alternative arrangement.
2. Right to own such land which at the time of enforcement of the new law was still the property of the landlords.
3. Right to all necessities of life, either from village or commune productions, or, otherwise suppliable by the government.
4. Abolition of all levies received by *jagirdars* in lieu of their *jagirs*.
5. Right to abolition of *Sahukari* debts.
6. Right to insurance and the benefits thereof.
7. Right to protection against floods, hailstorms, crop diseases, fire and damage to cattle.
8. Right to receive modern technical advice on the following :
 - (a) Gradation of crops,
 - (b) Soil,
 - (c) Fertilizers and irrigation,
 - (d) Drought and remedies for it,
 - (e) Eradication of malaria,
 - (f) Agricultural implements,
 - (g) Protection of crops,
 - (h) Godowns,
 - (i) Poultry,
 - (j) Fodder and animal husbandry,
 - (k) Sanitation.
9. Right to proper transportation of food grains.
10. Right to use of forests.
11. Right to free medical aid.
12. Right to sanitary-fitted housing and clean villages.
13. Right to cooperative-life and its amenities.
14. Right to education.³³

The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference believes in raising the standard of living by industrial production. But it does not want man to be the slave of a machine. According to the "Naya Kashmir" manifesto, a machine would be a friend of man if it is owned by the State, so that it is used for the benefit of all its citizens. Thus the manifesto envisages the nationalization of all existing industries and establishment of new ones in the public sector. It requires to State to ensure :

- (i) Abolition of industrial monopoly;
- (ii) All big and basic industries shall be owned by the State;
- (iii) Confiscation of all individual monopoly, whether formal or informal, by the State;
- (iv) All industries related to forests to be owned by the State;

- (v) Investments in small industries would be encouraged within the framework of the State Industrial Planning and under the State Industrial Council.

Srinagar Session of the National Conference, 1944

The momentous 1944 session of the National Conference was held in Mujahid Manzil in the heart of the city of Srinagar. From all corners of Jammu and Kashmir, from the remote Gurez Valley to the sun-scorched borders of the Punjab, delegates and visitors flocked in their thousands to hear the new message of the National Conference.

In his Presidential address, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah made a stirring appeal for the unity of the Kashmir people under the banner of the National Conference, for only through unity could they achieve the "Naya Kashmir" which was their goal.

According to Sheikh Abdullah, the independence of India from the British was an essential pre-requisite for the freedom of the princely states. In his presidential address he said :

"The all Jammu and Kashmir National Conference has always championed and supported the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity, and at all times we have held that the biggest obstacle in the way of India's freedom is the difference and distrust between the two great communities. Therefore, every attempt at unity we consider auspicious. From the core of our heart we want the unity of the Hindus and Muslims of India. To settle these details is the task of the Congress and the League. And the leaders of these organizations, Gandhiji and Mr. Jinnah were the best persons for this. Our duty, along with that our countrymen, was to support the move for unity. We could not forget that the Gandhi-Jinnah agreement would have brought the hour of India's Independence nearer.

Moreover, the independence of India is the essential pre-requisite for the independence of the State peoples. So long as the India outside the States' borders continues to the area for deadlock and depression, thaw will not release the ice-bound politics of the Indian States. Therefore, the all Jammu and Kashmir National Conference has cherished the unity of the Indian people as its fondest hope and has considered supporting it to the prime duty imposed by patriotism and love of freedom".³⁹

Much time was spent on discussions of the articles of the "Naya Kashmir" manifesto and finally it was declared :

- "The Working Committee of the National Conference which always has its hand on the pulse of the people, feels that at this time when political and economic systems are in the melting pot and ideas of a New World Order are being debated, it too must formulate more concretely its own conception of the New Kashmir it strives to build. The National

Conference envisages the future of New Kashmir in both political and economic terms. Towards that end we have drawn up a scheme which politically is based on the democratic principle of responsible government, with the elective principle applied from the Local Panchayat right up to the National Assembly. This is linked with the independence of the judiciary, and the ultimate responsibility of the Executive to the people. In the economic sphere, we have gone on the principle that planned economy is of the essence of progress, and that without it there can be no raising of the standard of the masses of the State. In our New Kashmir we shall build again the men and women of our State who have been dwarfed by centuries of servitude, and create a people worthy of our glorious motherland".⁴⁰

Farce of Dyarchy

The proclamation of October, 1944 by which the Maharaja had indicated his willingness to associate non-official members of the Legislature with the task of administration through the parties in the Legislature sending their nominees into the Cabinet, two in number, was naturally welcomed by the National Conference. Even though the transference of responsibility was partial, it at least, was an opportunity for the National Conference to come forward and assist in steering the boat of the State at a time when the lives of our people were storm-tossed through the distressing problems of hunger, poverty and slavery.

The National Conference Working Committee met, and decided to send in their nominee. While realising that this limited powers only, the concession was the result of democratic pressure and should be availed of.

To start with, very unfair attitude was shown in the allocation of portfolios. The nominee of the National Conference was given the Departments of P.W.D. and Municipalities, leaving out control on the Panchayats. He was given charge of stationery and printing and charge of the State property in British India. The allocation of these portfolios to the nominee of the people's biggest representative organization seems to be a huge-joke. Successive Prime Minister admitted the unreasonableness of such an allocation and had promised to reshuffle, but nothing happened.

In administering law and order, restrictive ordinances hitting the basic civil liberties of the people had been promulgated without Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beg knowing anything about them. The measures were adopted in the constituency which the Minister himself was representing and he himself knew nothing about it. Therefore, under these circumstances, it was ridiculous to expect the popular Minister to side with the Cabinet of Ministers in the Legislature on all points, surrendering his right to disagree and indicate his differences on the floor of the House, or even to remain neutral.⁴¹

At that time, the lives of Kashmiris were storm-tossed through the

distressing problems of hunger, poverty and slavery. It was due to the above that the National Conference had agreed to assist in steering the boat of the State. But the popular Minister, Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beg, had to face unfair administrative non-cooperation, ministerial intrigue and frustrating restrictions imposed by the Maharaja and his Prime Minister. He had to resign on the 17th of March, 1946. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said :

"Some States have attempted rather feebly to introduce a misuse of Dyarchy. This has not been successful and in the context of today has still less chances of success. Recently it has failed in Kashmir where one of the popular Ministers has had to resign because he was given no opportunity to function effectively."

The reaction of the National Conference were summarized by its organ as under :

"The 17th of March 1946 will always remain a red-letter day in the history of our movement. On this day Mr. M.A. Beg resigned and with his resignation ended a futile experiment in the revolutionary march of our people. A year and six months ago, our people called a temporary halt: We sought a short-out. We sent Mr. Beg into the Council. We hoped against hope that we would fight reaction and tyranny from within. But our hopes belied, the short-cut proved a long road. He has come back among his people. This is signal for the people to re-set their pace to the revolutionary tune of "New Kashmir", to fight tyranny by force of our organization, to end exploitation by force of our unity and to banish hunger and disease by force of our determination, Onward to "New Kashmir"! Onwards to revolution! Rest not till the goal is won".⁴²

Sheikh Abdullah issued a statement in which he said :

"The Prime Minister, backed by his clique of irresponsible bureaucrats, resorted to the base tactics of attempting to bribe and disrupt the ranks of the National Conference itself. In so doing they had resorted to Machiavellian ways, and Mian Ahmad Yar, the Leader of the whose appointment had taken place by direct command of the Maharaja, and Assembly Party has fallen prey to them. His representative capacity just does not exist. Thus the Maharaja has not only put an axe on the elective system of appointing popular ministers, on the lines, of his diarchic experiment, but has become a party to the conspiracy against the popular movement in the Kashmir.

Such an attack on the rights of the people, and the unity of their representative organization, has come at a time when the minds of the people of Kashmir are already exploring the new perspective opened up

by the attempts at constitution making of the Cabinet Mission. The question of the treaty rights of the Princes has become a moot point between the peoples of the State, the Princely Order, and the Paramount power. For us in Kashmir, the re-examination of this relationship is a vital matter, because a hundred years ago, in 1846, the land and people of Kashmir were sold away to the servitude of the Dogra House by the British for 75 lacs of rupees. The then Governor of Kashmir resisted the transfer but was finally reduced to subjection with the aid of British. Thus the sale deed of 1846, misnamed the Treaty of Amritsar, had sealed the fate of the masses of Kashmir".⁴³

This shows that the National Conference was preparing the masses for a big struggle against feudalism. It questioned the validity of the Treaty of Amritsar 1846 by which the British has sold Kashmir to Gulab Singh. The events in India had given a new impetus to the people of Kashmir and urged them to achieve absolute freedom from the autocratic rule of the Dogra House.

Sopore Session, 1945

The National Conference decided to hold its annual Session at Sopore, Kashmir on the 3rd, 4th and 5th of August, 1945. Invitations were issued to all the top leaders of the National Congress, and State Peoples Conference. The following leaders reached Srinagar in the last week of July, 1945 :

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru
Moulana Abu-ul-Kalam Azad
Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan
Mian Iftiqar-ud-Din
Mr. Jai Narayan Vayas
Mr. Asaf Ali
Mr. Kanya Lal Vaidya

A meeting of the Standing Committee of State Peoples Conference was held at Mujahid Manzil, Srinagar. Representatives from many States joined in the deliberations and important issues on State matters were thrashed out. An important resolution on Kashmir, condemning the mischievous plans of Pandit R.C. Kak, the Prime Minister of the Maharaja was passed. It was decided to fight against feudalism and feudal lords, who were creation of the British. On the first of August, 1945, all the guests were taken in boats on the river Jehlum in a magnificent procession. The communal and reactionary elements exhibited vulgarity and threw stones on the procession. In this skirmish one worker of the National Conference lost life.

In the evening, a mammoth public meeting was held in Hazuri Bagh Srinagar, in honour of Moulana Abul Kalam Azad. In his welcome address, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, thanked the Moulana for having come to

Kashmir during the turmoil of 1931 and extending full support to the Kashmiri freedom fighters. He added further :

"Our future and our fate is connected with the freedom struggle of India. We feel perturbed when we see that efforts to unite Indians in this struggle do not bear fruit. When our Muslim brothers feel apprehensive of the majority and if this issue can be solved by accepting the principle of self-determination, then it should be included in the agenda of the Indian National Congress. In Kashmir, the National Conference has accepted the principle of self-determination for all communities, not only in respect of creed but in the vast meaning of culture and this understanding has been given prominence in the programme of "Naya Kashmir".

The annual Session of the National Conference was held at Sopore in which, Sheikh Abdullah said :

"Naya Kashmir" represents conception of a model state, free from exploitation. It strikes at the root of feudalism, capitalism and imperialism."

Speechs made at this historic session laid emphasis on the bonds between Kashmir and India. The Indian leaders fed the growth of "freedom ideas" of the National Conference workers to such an extent that only next year they raised the slogan of "Quit Kashmir", demanding liquidation of the Maharaja. The ideal of the Indian National Congress, it was evident had fired the youthful imagination of the politically awakened Kashmiris.

Quit Kashmir Movement, 1946

In its meeting dated February 10, 1946, the Working Committee of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference took into consideration the speech made by the then Viceroy of India regarding constitutional advancement in the States, stating that the treaties made by the Princes be maintained in the Free India. Keeping in view that Kashmir had been sold by the then East India Company to Gulab Singh of Jammu at Rupees seventy-five lakhs, through the so called, Treaty of Amritsar, 1846, the National Conference declared :

"That the advice tendered by the Crown Representative to the Princes regarding the steps to be taken in making the administration of these States progressive did not amount to anything progressive. In fact it lost all its significance when he (Viceroy), made such progress conditional on the maintenance of the treaties and the consent of the Princes. These treaties and engagements which are outdated, reactionary and questionable have always stood and will always stand in the way of the State People's progress and to think that the Rulers will give up their privileged

positions that they enjoy under them at their sweet will is nothing but wishful thinking. The National Conference has at several occasions made it clear that these treaties have been made in times and under circumstances, which do not obtain now and have been framed without seeking the consent of the States people. Under such circumstances no treaties of engagements which act as a dividing wall between their progress and that of their brethren in British India, can be binding on the people".⁴⁴

In accordance with the decisions arrived at by the Working Committee of the National Conference, Sheikh Abdullah sent the following telegram to the Crips Mission :

"As President, All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference representing all communities and classes of people inhabiting Jammu and Kashmir State I welcome your visit to our State and hope that it will usher in a new era of freedom both political and economic for four million State people. As Mission is at moment reviewing relationship of Princes with the Paramount Power with reference to treaty rights we wish to submit that for us in Kashmir re-examination of this relationship is vital matter because hundred years ago in 1846 land and people of Kashmir were sold away to servitude of Dogra House by British for seventy five lacs of Sikh rupees equivalent to fifty lakhs of British Indian rupees. Then Government of Kashmir resisted transfer, but was finally reduced to subjection with aid of British. Thus sale deed of 1846 mis named Treaty of Amritsar sealed fate of Kashmir masses. We declare to world that the sale deed confers no privileges equivalent to those claimed by States governed by treaty rights. As such case of Kashmir stands on unique footing and people of Kashmir Press on Mission their unchallengeable claims to freedom on withdrawal of British power from India. We wish to declare that no sale deed however sacrosanct can condemn more than four million men and women to servitude of an autocrat when will to live under this rule is no longer there. People of Kashmir are determined to mould their own destiny and we appeal to Mission to recognise justice and strength of our cause".⁴⁵

In April 1946, the President of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference, submitted a memorandum to the Cabinet Mission at Delhi. It opens with the following words :

"Today the national demand of the people of Kashmir is not merely the establishment of responsible government but their right to absolute freedom from the autocratic rule of the Dogra House".

The Memorandum speaks of the commercial deal by which the whole beautiful valley was sold to Gulab Singh, the Dogra vassal of the Sikh

kingdom. The memorandum calls the Treaty of Amritsar as "the document of their bondage" for the past hundred years. Says the Memorandum :

"The cause of our contention is this that the sale deed which brought Kashmir under the rule of the Dogra House confers no privileges equivalent to those claimed by States governed by the so called Treaty Rights."

Proceeding further, the memorandum says :

"The immensity of the wrong done to our people by the sale deed of 1846 can only be judged by looking into the actual living conditions of the people of Kashmir. It is the depth of our torment that has given strength to our protest."

Sheikh Abdullah returned to the State on the 3rd of May, 1946 from Delhi, where he had gone to attend the meeting of the States People Conference. He found the people in an agitative mood and bitterly against the Maharaja as well as his Prime Minister. On the 6th of May, Sheikh Abdullah lashed out at the conspiracy of Pandit Kak having undermined dyarchy and asked the people to prepare themselves for a bigger struggle.

On the 13th of May, 1946 Sheikh Abdullah spoke before a large gathering as under :

"I announce it to the world that the decedents of Gulab Singh have no right to rule this land. We were not even told asked at that time when the British sold this land to him. Now, when the British have to quit India, we tell Hari Singh to quit Kashmir. We will collect fifty lakhs by contribution and tell him to vacate this land".⁴⁶

On the 14th of May, 1946 Sheikh Abdullah delivered a fiery speech at Noshera, Srinagar in which he said :

"Kashmir has been sold by one trader to another. Gulab Singh purchased Kashmir after having deceived the Sikhs. Since the day of purchase, we have been treated as animals. In the past they would take us on *begar* to Gilgit and most of the Kashmiris would die on the road with our coffins. Due to this atrocity many Kashmiri families ran away to the plains of Panjab. National Conference aims at the termination of *Dogra-shahi*. It is regrettable that we have lived in slavery for the past hundred years."⁴⁷

On the 16th of May, 1946 Sheikh Sahib delivered a lengthy speech at Maisuma, Srinagar in which he said :

"In 1846, Gulab Singh committed a detestable treachery and now in 1946, it was ordained that I should raise by protest against it. Every Indian, upto the last man will condemn Gulab Singh for this treachery. We do not want to become victims of the pleasures of rajas. Maharajas and

Nawabs. We wish to rid ourselves from slavery. A time will come when even the deed would emerge from graves, raising slogans :

Dogra raj murdabad
Kashmir ko chood do

Continuing further, Sheikh Abdullah said :

"I tell those, who raise the slogan of "Long live Hindu Dogra raj", that the basis of the Dogra raj is the detestable treachery, which was committed by Gulab Singh to perpetuate the continuance of the British imperialism.

Continuing further, Sheikh Sahib said :

Our war is open and you must join it. You must help the soldiers of freedom. You must establish relief committees for those freedom fighters who die in this war".⁴⁸

Extracts from the speech of Sheikh Abdullah are reproduced below :

"The tyranny of the Dogras has lacerated our souls. The Kashmiris are the most handsome people, yet the most wretched looking. It is time for action. To end your poverty, you must fight slavery and enter the field of *jihad* as soldiers. The fight slogan of our struggle is not only for our State but for the whole of India.

India is fighting against imperialism. The slogan was given on the banks of River Ravi. . . . Then came the slogan "Quit India". The British gained hold of India by the force of arms and by treachery.

The rulers of the Indian States who possess one-fourth of India, have always played traitors to the cause of Indian freedom. The demand that the Princely Order should quit is a logical extension of the policy of 'Quit India'. When the Indian freedom movement demands the complete withdrawal of British power, logically enough the stooges of British Imperialism also should go and restore sovereignty to its real owners—the people. When we raise the slogan of 'Quit Kashmir', we naturally visualise that the Princes and Nawabs should quit all the States. I am sure this demand applies similarly to a State like Hyderabad where the people will, I am sure, raise their voice, 'Quit Hyderabad'.

Handcuffs jingle. They do not make us afraid. God will give us faith in victory. The voice of truth will prevail. Prophets have spoken for the truth, which has always triumphed finally.

Sovereignty is not the birthright of a ruler. Every man, woman and child will shout "Quit Kashmir".⁴⁹

The "Quit Kashmir" movement is a landmark in the freedom struggle of the State. It spread like wild fire in different parts and created a bitter reaction

against the Maharaja. During day and nights, one could hear the following slogans from house tops :

"Dogra Raj Murdabad"
(Death to Dogra kingship)
"Harisinghun buol, khudayan gool"
(May God perish the progeny of Hari Singh)
"Rama hoonun mool, zina badla zool"
(Ram Chandra Kak's father will be burnt as fuel).

It was the final assault on the Maharaja and after it, the days of the autocracy became numbered.

D-Day 20th May

It was on the 20th May, 1946 that the Maharaja begin his operations against his people. On that day, he reached Srinagar from Jammu, spread his soldiers in all the major towns of Kashmir, and ordered that a lesson be taught to the people for insulting his dynasty. Not only, Sheikh Abdullah but other leaders of the National Conference including Pandit Sham Lal Saraf, Khwaja Mohammad Sultan Khan and others were arrested. The Special Correspondent of the Globe News Agency has given a graphic description of the operation as under :

"Monday May 20, 1946 was a D-Day and 4 P.M. was the zero hour. The cannons in the Hari Parbat Fort boomed a Salute of 21 guns announcing the arrival of the Maharaja in his summer capital of Srinagar. Simultaneously telegraph wires buzzed the coded message informing the Police headquarters in Srinagar that Sheikh Abdullah was arrested at Garhi, a bottleneck on the Srinagar—Rawalpindi Road. The signal was given and swarms of Gurkha and Dogra troops occupied every strategic point in and around Srinagar and literally threw a steel ring round it. With clock-work precision a country wide man hunt immediately began and within a few hours hundreds of people were arrested. By Wednesday, about three hundred people were arrested and more than 20 were killed, besides hundreds injured. The military took up positions at all important road, junctions and on all bridges and ordered all passersby to walk in line, one by one, with hands up, shouting "*Maharaja Bahadur ki Jai*". Those that hesitated or resented were beaten with rifle butt and often pricked on their backs with bayonet ends. Later, the people were ordered to walk with one leg leaping like lame men and shouting "*Maharaja Bhadur ki Jai*". Some were forced even to walk on their knee. Old men and respectable citizen were forced to crawl on the roads at the point of rifle. Shops were looted and fruit and cigarette vendors robbed. Terror reigned throughout the city for full 48 hours and all shops were closed and people kept indoors due to fear."⁵⁰

As soon as the news of the arrests reached Srinagar, mobs started pouring in the Mujahid Manzil the Headquarters of the National Conference in Srinagar. A call of hartal was given and raising of slogans against the Maharaja continued throughout the night. Next day, protest processions started moving in Srinagar and other important town of Kashmir. Many were injured and many died in the military firings. The Maharaja issued the following notification :

"Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and his numerous followers have been arrested. During the previous two weeks he and his followers had began a series of Lectures, in which people were incited to finish the present government. Not only the Maharaja Bhadur but his dynasty has been abused. It appears that for the breakdown of the administration, preparations had been made for a full scale agitation. In the interest of law and order and for the protection of peaceful citizens, the Government had to take precautionary measures. In order to assist the Police, the Military has been called. Today morning, unlawful processionists have, at many places, indulged in stone throwing on military petrols and many sepoys and one officer has been injured. In order to protect themselves, the petrols have fired. All processions, meetings and gatherings have been banned. Further Curfew has been imposed in Srinagar".

Out of the prominent leaders of the National Conference, two, namely Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad and Khawaja Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq fled towards the Panjab and one, namely Khawaja Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din Kara went under-ground. He earned the title of "Bulbul-i-Kashmir" from the masses for his daring acts during the course of the "Quit Kashmir" movement.

Hari Singh, the Maharaja dealt with the agitation exactly the way the British had done to crush the "Quit India" movement. He took all measures to suppress the Kashmiris, who came out as fearless fighters and demanded release of their leaders. Mass gatherings resisted the tyranny with determination and fought back the savage regime of the Maharaja. They recited the revolutionary songs of Mahjoor and Iqbal and faced bullets.⁵¹

On the 27th of May, 1946 Pandit Nehru called upon the State units of the Indian All India State Peoples Conference to hold meetings all over India on the 2nd June, in sympathy with the sufferers of Kashmir. He also directed that funds be raised for the victims of the military firings in the "Quit Kashmir" movement.

Suppression let loose on the Kashmiri people shocked the Indian leaders who came out with statements in sympathy with the National Conference. Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan in a statement said :

"My heart goes out to Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and his band of loyal and selfless workers in this hour of their supreme trial. The arrest of

Sheikh Abdullah and the killing of innocent men and women has caused great pain."⁵²

Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru in his statement declared :

"Both as the President of All India States People's Conference and as a Kashmiri I have been greatly troubled by the recent developments in Kashmir. Some weeks ago, a Committee of the National Conference sent a memorandum to the Cabinet delegation, raising the question of the Amritsar Treaty and demanding that this treaty be abrogated and Kashmir ruled by the people of the State. There is a great deal of talk of Dynastic rights and privileges but no dynasty or individual can claim to override the fundamental rights of the people. Sovereignty will have to reside in the people and what follows will, thus, necessarily, be according to the wish of the people. What happened in Kashmir clearly demonstrates the desire of the State authorities to avail themselves of any pretext to crush the popular movement. The whole of the valley was handed over to the military administration. The police being Kashmiris were withdrawn. A reign of terrorism and frightfulness, then began. Kashmir has practically been cut off from the outside world since then and martial law prevails there. There have been conflicts with crowds and firing on numerous occasions. Srinagar is almost a city of the dead where movement is difficult and large numbers of people are practically interned in their own houses. Apart from the many hundreds who have been put in prison, clashes occur daily and even women have been shot down. Dead bodies are not handed to the relatives for burial according to religious rites, but are soaked in petrol and burnt. The mosques, including their inner shrines have been occupied by the military."⁵³

The 'Quit Kashmir' movement was sporadic and spontaneous. Mass arrests, shooting, victimisation and crawling orders had become order of the day. The State Government declared that the *Hindu Raj* was in danger, but the problem was basically a political one. The Prime Minister of the State, Mr. Kak declared that we have been preparing it for 11 months and we are ready to meet the challenge. We shall be ruthlessly firm and we make no apology about it.⁵⁴ This clearly shows that the Government was deliberately preparing to fight and crush ruthlessly the freedom struggle. As a climax to the Kashmir revolt, the Sheikh and other leaders including, Sardar Budh Singh, Moulana Massodi, were brought on trial and accused of sedition and revolt against the Maharaja.⁵⁵ Pandit Nehru sent a telegram to the Prime Minister of Kashmir and to the Maharaja also, saying that he will arrange defence of the accused as well as try to settle the whole issue in a peaceful way. The Maharaja replied that Nehru's visit to Kashmir at that juncture will entail unfortunate consequences.⁵⁶ On 16th June 1946, Pandit Nehru wrote a personal letter to the Maharaja imploring that every endeavour should be made to bring peace in Kashmir and

that can be achieved with the release of the Sheikh and his colleagues. He further indicated that it was his desire to meet the Maharaja and "lay the foundations of a settlement". Here are the excerpts from his letter :

"I am much more concerned, however, as I have no doubt, you are also, with the general situation in Kashmir of which this trial is only a part. I should very much like to be of some help in the solution of the problems that have arisen there. My main object in going is to endeavour to do so. I want, as you must also desire, peace and development in Kashmir State. I feel, however, that it will not be possible, to return to normality and peace unless these trials are withdrawn and Sheikh Abdullah and his colleagues are released."

"The problem of Kashmir is important enough by itself and some of us are intensely interested in it. At the present moment, however, it has additional importance in whole context of Indian States. The Constituent Assembly is likely to come into being soon and each State and, more especially, the major States, will have to consider representation in this Assembly. You are, I presume, aware of the popular demand put forward both by the Indian National Congress and the All India States People's Conference that representation in the Constituent Assembly should be by means of representatives elected by the people. All these and similar problems have to be faced very soon. It is obvious that the difficulty inherent in these problems will be greatly increased if the situation in Kashmir is abnormal and the State is in conflict with the popular organisation there".⁵⁷

The Maharaja being arrogant, ignored the letter of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who against the wishes of his colleagues decided to proceed towards Kashmir.

Arrest of Nehru

As stated above, Pandit Nehru had written to the Maharaja that on 16th June, 1946 that he would reach Srinagar by the 19th evening along with defence lawyers for the sedition case against Sheikh Abdullah, and others. Further it was his mission to bring about a settlement in view of the larger interests of the country. But the Maharaja as well his Prime Minister, due to their arrogant natures, ignored it. When Pandit Nehru and his colleagues reached Kohalla, a border outpost on the Rawalpindi-Srinagar road, he was stopped and handed over an order issued by the Magistrate banning his entry into the State territory. Pandit Nehru saw a platoon of Durga soldiers, with mounted byonets barricading the road. Outraged and enraged, Pandit Nehru broke through the cordon of soldiers and walked towards on way to Srinagar. At Domel, 30 miles inside the State boundary, he was put under arrest.

Pandit Nehru's arrest by a little stooge of imperialism created Widespread resentment throughout the country. Hundreds of telegrams reached the State Government deploring the foolish action of the Maharaja. The National Press,

bye and large deplored the attitude of the Maharaja's Government. Wrote Hindustan Standard :

"Those little Fuehrers of Kashmir dressed in little brief authority, drank with lust of power have run a much. They have capped their tale of miserable misdeeds with an insane outrage on the person of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, followed, by the arrest of the nations beloved leader."⁵⁸

Next day, Maulana Azad, on behalf of the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress asking Pandit Nehru to return to Delhi where his presence was urgently needed. Subsequently, Panditji returned to Delhi and remarked :

"Highness and Excellencies do not count in people's eyes in the India of today. Treaty rights, which are as dead as a doornail, or dynastic rights, which have no value in people's eyes do not count. It is only human rights that count. It is by that standard above that all problems have to be considered and judged."⁵⁹

The Viceroy got in touch with the Maharaja and warned him at his foolish action. Hari Singh felt his blunder and deputed his Prime Minister to Bombay where he met Sardar Patel and implored pardon. The ban imposed on the entry of Pandit Nehru was removed and he came to Srinagar on the 24th of July, 1946. After appearing in the trial court of defend Sheikh Abdullah, he left for Delhi on the 29th of July, 1946.⁶⁰

Trial of National Conference Leaders

In Kashmir, the National Conference leaders, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, Pandit Sham Lal Saraf, Khwaja Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din Vakil, and Khawaja Mohammad Sultan Khan were tried for sedition and treason. The case against Sheikh Abdullah started on the 3rd of June, 1946 in the Badami Bagh Cantonment. The prosecution was lead by Jaswant Singh and the defence was lead by Jia Lal Kilam. During the later hearings, the National Congress provided the services of Mr. Baldev Sahai, Dewan Chaman Lal and Mr. Asaf Ali for the defence of Sheikh Abdullah. In his defence Sheikh Saib said :

"Oppressed by the extreme poverty and lack of freedom and opportunity of the People of Jammu and Kashmir State. I and my colleagues of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference, many of whom are behind prison bars or in exile today, have humbly sought to serve them during the past sixteen years. We have endeavoured to give faithful expression to the growing consciousness among the people of their imprescriptable rights, aspirations and desire for freedom. This has attracted the panel and preventive provisions of law, where law is not based on the will of the people, it can lend itself of the suppression of their aspirations. Such

law has no moral validity even though it may be enforced for a while. There is a law higher than that, the law that represents the people's will and secures their well-being, and there is the tribunal of human conscience, which judges the rulers and the ruled alike by standards which do not change by the arbitrary will of the most powerful. To that law I gladly submit and that tribunal I shall face with confidence and without fear, leaving it to history and posterity to pronounce their verdict on the claims I and my colleagues have made not merely on behalf of the four million people of Jammu and Kashmir but also of the ninety-three million people of all the states of India. That claim has not been confined to the people of a particular race, or religion or colour. It applies to all, for I hold that humanity as a whole is indivisible by such barriers and human rights must always prevail. The fundamental rights of all men and women to live and act as free beings, to make laws and fashion their political, social and economic fabric, so that they may advance the cause of human freedom and progress, as inherent and cannot be denied though they may be suppressed for a while. I hold that sovereignty resides in the people, all relationships political, social and economic, derive authority from the collective will of the people."

The Court delivered its judgement on the 10th of September, 1946 in which he was Sheikh Abdullah was found guilty of sedition and treason and sentenced to imprisonment for three years each for three speeches and a fine of Rs. 500 for each speech.

Sardar Budha Singh was sentenced to one a half years imprisonment for having incited the people through a speech on the 16th of May, through his speeches in May, 1946 against the Maharaja, Maulana Syed Masoodi, General Secretary of the National Conference was also sentenced. Besides this hundreds of workers were summarily tried and sentenced. All political prisoners were maltreated by the jail staff and suffered tremendously.⁶¹

The Maharaja and his Government had done whatever was in its power to crush the popular movement but without any success. Those were crucial days for India, because the British Government had deputed the Cabinet Mission for some political settlement with the Indian leaders. A new Constitution for the whole of India, with a new Constituent Assembly had to be convened and the States had to join it. The Muslim Conference under the influence of the State Prime Minister Pandit Kak, declared that the State should remain independent, but the National Conference rose to the occasion and preached unity and freedom of all political prisoners.

By and large the Dogras of Jammu and the Pandits of Kashmir, as well as the vested interests like the jagirdars, sahuikars and zaildars did not realise the danger faced by the Jammu and Kashmir State vis-a-vis the Pakistan demand. The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference was the only stabilising political force in the State and small political parties like the Hindu Rajya

Sabha, Yuvak Sabha, Kisan Conference could play no role in this context. Every sane and sensible person came to this conclusion that the State had only one spokesman to represent the views of the people and he was Sheikh Abdullah. The Maharaja banked on the support of jagirdars, landlords, and aristocracy in general and the Dogra people of Jammu in particular. Pandit Kak, in order to retain his post as the Prime Minister, created a clique aspiring an emperor's status for Hari Singh in the northern regions of Ladakh, Himachal, Kashmir, Jammu and Lahore. This clique had the backing of the mysterious Swami Santdev, who had established himself firmly as the *Rajguru* claiming miraculous powers.⁶² This Swami had declared to make Hari Singh as the emperor of Northern India through his great occult powers. At this juncture, the Kangra faction among the Dogras had obtained full mastery over Hari Singh and his wife, who also belonged to Kangra. When the future of India was at stake due to the Muslim League's demand for division, Hari Singh was bagged down to the court intrigues engineered by the Swami with the help of the Maharani and her Kangra faction.

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Accession with India

“Kashmir would be a beacon light to the benighted subcontinent
—Mahatama Gandhi

On the 20th of February, 1947, the British decided to quit and transfer power to the “responsible Indian hands”, by a date not later than June 1948. The new Viceroy could not bring reproachment between the Muslim League and the National Congress and decided to proceed on the basis of a plan which envisaged division of India two dominions. Accordingly, the British Parliament set the 15th of August, 1947 as date for transfer of power to India and the newly created Pakistan. Thus the entire subcontinent excepting Jammu and the Kashmir State, was thus divided into Hindu majority and Muslim majority areas. In Kashmir, the National Conference, premier political organisation of the State, opposed joining Pakistan and urged upon the Congress leaders to accept the accession of the State to India subject to the subsequent ratification of the act by a referendum.¹

Mountbatten as representative of the Crown, addressing the Chamber of Princes in New Delhi on the 25th July, 1947 said, that the Indian Independence Act released the states from all their obligation to the Crown. As such, the States would have complete freedom and technically and legally, they would be independent.²

There were 584 of these Princely States scattered over the subcontinent, covering 45.3 percent of its surface and with a population of some 99 million people.³

In a “Memorandum on States Treaties and Paramountcy”. the Cabinet Mission informed the Chamber of Princes that after the transfer of British Powers to an independent Government of India, His Majesty's Government will cease to exercise the powers of paramountcy. This meant that the rights of the States which flow from their relationship to the Crown will no longer exist and that all the rights surrendered by the States to paramount power will return to the States.⁴

The decision of the British to quit from India seriously touched the status of the Indian Princes. They were given the option of acceding to one of

the Dominions by the 15th of August, 1947, failing which they were to look after themselves, free from the obligations of the Paramount Power. However, the prospect of remaining independent seemed alluring to some and Maharaja Hari Singh was serious about it. Swami Santdev had planted the idea of an independent kingdom in his mind. Pandit R.C. Kak had also given his own analysis of the political events which convinced the Maharaja that the best course open to him was to bid time.

Manoeuvres of the Maharaja

In July, 1947, the Viceroy paid a visit to Kashmir for a political mission. He wanted to persuade the Maharaja to make up his mind before 15th August. On the advice of his Prime Minister, Kak, the Maharaja avoided to commit himself. He and his advisors had made their own plans to meet the situation. When Sardar Patel sent a message to him through Pandit Kak, to come down to Delhi for talks, the Maharaja refused to move.⁵ He had his own plan in the context of his having fallen victim of the suggestion made by the Swami and Kak to carve out a kingdom in the troublant India. Accordingly, he set in motion his plan.

Firstly, he brought General Janak Singh Katoch of Kangra to be the Prime Minister of the State. Two other Ministers from Kangra, Mr. Ram Lal Batra and Lala Mehr Chand Mahajan also appeared on the scene. Having removed General Scott, the Maharaja made Brigadier Rajinder Singh the Chief of the Army Staff of the Jammu and Kashmir State Forces. All experienced military officers belonging to the Dogra or Gurkha regiments were recalled. A scheme for re-raising of the Mountain Batteries was drafted.⁶ Efforts were accelerated to obtain arms and ammunition from various sources. Mr. Ram Lal Batra, Deputy Prime Minister of the State was entrusted to initiate para-military training centres and in this context, he patronised R.S.S. military training camps. Rifles and pistols were distributed among the Dogra population. He set up one medium wave transmitter at Jammu feeling that if Kashmir could not be retained, a front would be created whether independently or within the Indian Union to ward off the enemy from Jammu. The transmitter was secured through Sardar Patel.⁷

The Maharaja drew his army from Hindus, Sikhs and Gurkhas. He knew that in World War II, of the 71,667 citizens of the State of Jammu and Kashmir, who served in the British Indian forces, 60,402 were Muslims. But the Maharaja also knew that as Muslims, they were good risks as members of his army. As such, the Maharaja strengthened his garrisons in the spring of 1947 by importing Sikhs and Hindus.⁸

All efforts on the part of Indian leaders and Lord Mountbatten to persuade him to take a decision one way or the other proved abortive. The Maharaja had every hope that he would be able to have Kashmir accepted as an independent State by India and Pakistan and possibly by other powers also.

He was anxious to have an independent Kashmir with himself as its king.⁹

In order to safeguard his future kingdom, the Maharaja deployed his forces at Kohala, Leh, Gilgit, Poonch, Mirpur, Srinagar and Jammu. He deputed further reinforcements to Brigadier Gansara Singh, who had earlier been posted as the Governor of Gilgit. By taking all these measures, he thought that he had secured his position.

The Maharaja was in no mode to take people into confidence nor release their leaders from his jails. Mahatma Gandhi visited Srinagar in the first week of August, 1947 and addressed many meetings. When the Mahatma met the Maharaja, he told him to take people into confidence and align himself with them. This implied that Hari Singh had to release Sheikh Abdullah and other leaders of the National Conference. Such advice had no effect on the Maharaja and instead he applied for Stand Still Agreement with both the Dominions. While the Government of Pakistan accepted the offer of the Maharaja, the Government of India desired discussions with the authorised Minister of the Maharaja together with Sheikh Abdullah as representative of the people.

We do not know what took place in the interview between Gandhiji and Maharaja Hari Singh. But we know what Gandhiji said to the Hindu delegation which met him in Srinagar. He told them that only the people of the State should have the power and the opportunity to decide the issue of accession. He even went so far as to advise that the Hindus should leave the decision entirely to their Muslim countrymen so that Hindu vote not tilt the balance in favour of India. After his departure from the State at the Rawalpindi refugee camp, he said that the Kashmir question should be amicably settled between India, Pakistan, the Maharaja and the people of Kashmir. But Gandhiji also believed that it was not fair to the people that a decision on this issue should be arrived at while the largest and most representative political party, the National Conference was behind the bars. He wanted Sheikh Abdullah to be released.¹⁰

Revolt in Poonch

Poonch was originally a small hill state, ruled over by Raja Roh-ullah Khan, who rebelled against Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1814. Later, Gulab Singh, a vassal of the Sikh kingdom, slew the Raja and handed over Poonch the state to his nephew, Dhian Singh. After 1847, enmity between the two Dogra houses of Poonch and Jammu grew up and the Poonch State was reduced to a tributary State of the Jammu and Kashmir State. However, the Raja maintained a standing army of 1200 with a battery of guns.¹¹ At the time Hari Singh was made the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, by the British, the Raja of Poonch advanced his claims and the matter was adjudicated against him. Since then, Hari Singh began his moves to bring down the Raja to the position of a petty jagirdar. The Raja felt helpless and decided to encourage Muslims so as to obtain their support. Secondly, he selected a youngman, from the Sudhan.

clan, Sardar Mohammad Ibrahim Khan and brought him up as his son, providing expenses of his education in England. The Poonch is had no occupation except to serve as soldiers. In the second World War, Poonch had provided 60,000 soldiers to the British.

During the "Quit Kashmir" movement, the Poonchis raised the banner of revolt against the Maharaja, who deputed his military forces to suppress Poonch. His dispossed the Raja and established his direct rule in this tributary State. In order to exhibit his authority in the region, the Maharaja placed his Governor at Poonch, who imposed many tyrannous taxes on the people". There was a tax on every hearth and every window. Every cow, buffalo and sheep was taxed and even every wife. Finally the *zaildari* tax was introduced to pay for the cost of taxation, and Dogra troops were billeted on the Poonchis to enforce collection".¹² It was before the release of Sheikh Abdullah that the trouble in Poonch had started and developed into a major revolt. The Dogra troops exercised much force than what was required.¹³ Thus when the Maharaja engaged himself in his brutal exercises, hundreds of the Poonchi soldiers returned to find their hearths and homes devastated by the Dogra soldiers. They rose in revolt and this revolt was lead by no other person than Sardar Mohammad Ibrahim Khan, who had been nourished by the Raja of Poonch for avenging the Maharaja. While the Muslim extremists slipped into Poonch and Jammu, the Hindu extremists crossed the borders to save the throne of Maharaja Hari Singh. During this period, the Maharaja was in a delirium. In his heart he wished to remain independent but being a Hindu, all his sympathy went with India. As such, there is no doubt that he was anti-Pakistan. On the one hand his psychological alliance went with India, on the other hand he felt afraid of his Muslim subjects who formed 80% majority in his State. In order to keep them at rest, he sent a telegram to Pakistan on 12th August, 1947 suggesting that the existing arrangements, which existed with the outgoing British Indian Government, should continue pending settlement of details and formal execution of fresh agreement. The Government of Pakistan communicated its agreement through a telegram dated 15th of August, 1947 to the Prime Minister of Jammu and Karhmir State.¹⁴

Sheikh Abdullah Released

In September, 1947, Mehr Chand Mahajan, the Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir State went to Delhi to call upon Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India. At that time all the major road and rail communication systems lay through the Pakistani territory and only a kacha road existed between India and Jammu via Pathankot. Mr. Mahajan had gone to Delhi to obtain help for construction of the Jammu-Pathankot road, so that essential supplies could reach Jammu from India. After the discussions, Pandit Nehru asked Mr. Mahajan to obtain release of Sheikh Abdullah from jail. On his return from Delhi, he conveyed the feelings of Pandit Nehru to the Maharaja,

who insisted on obtaining an undertaking from Sheikh Sahib.¹⁵

The British had left India and Pakistan in an ocean of blood and this freedom had costed them killing of millions of innocent Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. As the country had been divided on the basis of religion, streams of refugees were pouring into India and Pakistan to seek protection with their co-religionists. All these happenings were heard by Sheikh Abdullah in Jail and he became impatient to save Kashmir from such a communal hatred. He had fought for communal harmony throughout his life and was the inventor of this slogan :

Sher-i-Kashmir ka kiya irshad
Hindu Muslim Sikh itihad !

At the instance of Mr. Mahajan, Sheikh Sahib wrote the following letter to the Maharaja on the 26th of September, 1947.

May it please Your Highness,

It is about one and half year's incarceration that—as long wished—I had an opportunity of having detailed talks with Thakar Nachint Chand Ji. What unfortunate things happened during this period in the State I need not mention. But this is now realised by every well-wisher of the State that many of the regrettable happenings of the past have mainly been due to the misunderstandings which appear now to have deliberately been created by interested people in order to achieve their own ends. R.B. Ramachandra Kak, the ex-Prime Minister through his mischievous methods and masterly manoeuvrings brought these misunderstandings to a climax and succeeded in his attempt, though temporarily, to a certain extent. He painted me and my organization in the darkest colours and in everything that we did or attempted to do to bring Your Highness and your people closer; base and selfish motives were attributed to me. But God be thanked that all these enemies of Your Highness and the State stand exposed today.

Inspite of what has happened in the Past, I assure Your Highness that myself and my party have never harboured any sentiment of disloyalty towards Your Highness' person, throne or dynasty. The development of this beautiful country and the betterment of its people is our common aim and interest and I assure Your Highness the fullest and loyal support of myself and my organisation. Not only this but I assure Your Highness, that any party, within or without the State which may attempt to create any impediments in our efforts to gain our goal, will be treated as our enemy and will be treated as such.

In order to achieve the common aim set forth above, mutual trust and confidence must be the mainstay. Without this it would not be possible to face successfully the great difficulties that beset our State on all sides at present.

Before I close this letter I beg to assure Your Highness once again of my steadfast loyalty and pray that God under Your Highness' aegis bring such an

era of Peace, Prosperity and Good Government that it may be second to none and be an ideal for others to copy.¹⁶

Your Highness'
Most Obedient Subject
S.M. Abdullah

Freedom before Accession

While the State was in the midst of revolt due to the instigation of pro-Pakistani elements, the Maharaja ordered release of Sheikh Abdullah and other National Conference leaders on the 29th of September, 1947. He was given a hero's welcome and people gathered in a Srinagar park to hear him. In his first address, he warned the people about the danger of communalism and declared that his life mission was the unity of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. He said that the Maharaja had no power to take any decision on the issue of accession without the consent of the people. In another public speech, he declared :

"Accession is of little importance. Freedom is more important. We do not want to join either Dominion as slaves. I warn the Government of India and Pakistan that if the Maharaja decides to join either of these without our consent, we shall rise in revolt against such a decision".¹⁷

With the establishment of the two Dominions the question of the future of Kashmir came before the people of the State. The population of the State being predominantly (78 percent) Muslim, it was thought almost as a foregone conclusion that the State would accede to Pakistan. But among certain sections, opinion was sharply divided. By curious and agreeable coincidence it so happened that while some Muslims favoured Kashmir's accession to India, certain liberal Hindus wanted it to join Pakistan. As appreciable number of people advocated that, in view of the high tension then existing in the whole of the sub-continent, Kashmir should remain independent.¹⁸

On the 5th of October, 1947, Sher-i-Kashmir, Sheikh Abdullah delivered a speech at the famous shrine of Hazratbal, Srinagar. He said :

"Our aim is to establish a people's government in the Jammu and Kashmir State. The old regime of the Dogra Maharaja must go and should be replaced by the people's raj. If four million people of the State are bypassed and the State declares its accession to India or Pakistan, I shall raise the banner of revolt and we shall start our struggle. We want complete freedom to decide our fate. Of course, we will opt for that Dominion, where our own demands for freedom are recognised. We can not join those who say that the people must have no choice. Our first demand is complete transfer of power to the people. It will be the representatives of the people who will decide as to whether we should join India or Pakistan".

He had taken a correct stand because at that time, the Maharaja was all in all and he had a nominated Cabinet with Mr. Mehr Chand Mahajan as the Prime Minister. Sheikh Abdullah aimed at the Prime Ministership so that he could hold administration of the State in his own hands and then start negotiations with India and Pakistan. But the Maharaja had no inclination to instal a people's government in the State. Considering himself as the ruler of the State, which he really was, he thought that it was below his dignity to entrust the affairs of his State to Sheikh Abdullah. The position of his Prime Minister, Mr. Mahajan was different and he was just like a civil servant, thrust upon him by Sardar Patel.¹⁹

When Mahatama Gandhi heard about the situation in Kashmir, he declared in the Prayer Meeting as under :

"Subjects of a State are its real rulers. If subjects of Kashmir say that they want to go in Pakistan, then there is no power in the world to stop their going in Pakistan. But they should be asked in peace and full freedom. They should not be subjected to attack and they should not be forced by burning their villages. If its subjects say that despite its majority being Muslims, they want to live in the Indian Union, then nobody can stop them."²⁰

Hari Singh and Accession

On the 10th of October, 1947, the Maharaja convened a meeting of war experienced Dogra officers, who had retired from the military service, at Gulab Mahal Palace. After discussions it was decided to ask all experienced Hindu soldiers and officers to rejoin service. It was also decided to re-raise Mountain Batteries and Colonel Bhagwan Singh was asked to put up a scheme on the next day. The Maharaja had sensed some bigger trouble from Pakistan and he felt panicky. In such a situation, he could get all military help from the Government of India but for accession. As such, he made up his mind now to accede to India.

The scheme prepared by Colonel Bhagwan Singh was discussed on the 11th of October, 1947 and approved. After this a delegation under the Colonel reached Delhi with a letter for Sardar Patel from the Maharaja, alongwith a list of arms, guns and ammunition needed. Sardar Patel tried his best to procure the military stores but for accession with India. The Colonel explained that His Highness wanted no delay in accession and desired that it should be brought about immediately, but the Sardar said : No, No, Not, yet. However, the Colonel returned with an assurance that the guns and connected military stores would follow.²¹

Sheikh Abdullah was present at Delhi on the 10th of October, 1947 and negotiations between the Maharaja and the leaders of the National Conference had started under the agency of Government of India. In these negotiations, Mehr Chand Mahajan participated as the representative of the Maharaja. The

future set up of the State was decided between the Maharaja and the National Conference leaders.²²

Mehr Chand Mahajan wanted to achieve two objectives in the shortest possible period. One was to improve existing link between Pathankot and Jammu and the other was to obtain arms and ammunition for the newly organised State Forces. It goes to his credit that he succeeded in both these objectives. "The first thing he did was to speed up negotiations with the Indian Government whom he requested for a liberal supply of arms and ammunition for the state troops. The Indian Government too had been forced to think realistically by reports about preparations in the tribal areas for an invasion of Kashmir. So they agreed to supply the necessary arms".²³

The Maharaja had entered into a Standstill Agreement with Pakistan ensuring the State, essential supplies, communications and common services. Hardly a month had passed when Pakistan started putting hurdles in the movement of rations and supplies to Kashmir. This economic blockade was launched by Pakistan to coerce the Maharaja into submission. Mehr Chand Mahajan, the Prime Minister turned to Delhi for help and he got what he wanted. In one of his letters to him, Pandit Nehru wrote as under :

"I am aware of the difficulties, Kashmir has had recently, more especially in regard to the attitude adopted by Pakistan towards it. When you were here last we discussed this matter also. I assured you then that we have the friendliest feelings towards Kashmir and its people and that we would gladly help to the best of our ability in providing Kashmir with the commodities it specially needs".

"Regarding other forms of assistance, you have our good-will but you will appreciate that these will depend on circumstances. I suggest to you that there should be close contact between Kashmir State authorities and our Government so as to ensure co-operation in matters of common concern".²⁴

Hari Singh Applies for Accession

It was on the 23rd of October, 1947, that Hari Singh deputed his Deputy Prime Minister to Delhi in an Indian military plane with accession papers. He had also enclosed letters for Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel.²⁵ Sheikh Abdullah, who was in Delhi since 16th of October, 1947 was apprised about the situation and the result of negotiations between the Maharaja and the legal advisors of National Conference. The Maharaja had, at last, agreed to associate Sheikh Abdullah with his Prime Minister in the administration of the State. Information had reached Delhi that the tribal raiders assisted by Pakistan had arrived in Domel on the 22nd of October 1947 and had crossed the river Jhelum the next day. Pandit Nehru discussed the whole situation with Azad, Patel and Abdullah and it was decided that the Instrument of Accession sent by the Maharaja will be accepted subject to its ratification by a reference to the people of the Jammu and Kashmir State. After proper briefing, Sheikh

Mohammad Abdullah reached Srinagar from Delhi through a military aircraft on the 23rd of October, 1947. There were wild rumours in Srinagar that the days of Mahajan were numbered and Sheikh Abdullah would be soon asked to take over as the Prime Minister of the State.²⁶

Pakistan Aggression

The British withdrew from India in August, 1947, and the country became free after centuries of alien rule. At the same time, the sub-continent was partitioned and a separate Dominion of Pakistan came into being. The Pakistan Government, soon after it was established, imposed an economic blockade on Jammu and Kashmir. The flow of essential commodities into the State along Jhelum Valley Road was stopped without any warning and in violation of agreements in force. Consequently, the people in the State were faced with an acute shortage of these commodities and had to suffer great hardship and privation. As subsequent events established, these measures were aimed at coercing the State into joining Pakistan.

A glaring example of Pakistan's aggression Kashmir is afforded by happenings in the strategic frontier area of Gilgit. The Gilgit Agency was leased by the Maharaja to the British in 1935 for a period of 60 years. With the exit of the British from India, the lease terminated and the civil and military control reverted back to the Maharaja. Consequently, the Government deputed its Governor to Gilgit in August, 1947.

Soon after, the Gilgit scouts, led by Major Brown, revolted against established authority and imprisoned the Governor. The rebels received all possible aid and assistance from the Pakistan Government. The Gilgit territory, a part of Jammu and Kashmir State, was subsequently brought under the direct control of Pakistan Government which deputed a political Officer to rule over the area.

While the economic blockade was continuing, the State was subjected to armed invasion from Pakistan territory in the Panjab and the North Western Frontier Province. On September 3, 1947, a gang of 300 men armed with spears and guns waylaid and murdered a subject of the State near Samba. Another armed band of 400 Pakistani nationals attacked the village of Dohali, 12 miles south-east of Ranbirsinghpura in the Jammu Province. The marauders looted the village and burnt down houses. These armed incursions into State territory increased in number and magnitude and developed into a multipronged invasion of the territories of the State. On 22nd of October, 1947, nearly 2000 tribesmen encroached into Muzaffarabad. They had come via Aibatabad in private buses and were armed with country made guns.²⁷ They had been aroused by stories about the slaughter of Muslims by the Dogra soldiers of the Maharaja.²⁸ It was Sardar Mohammad Ibrahim Khan of Poonch, who was the brain behind this venture and he had obtained full support of Abdul Qayoom Khan, the Chief Minister of the N.W.F. Province of Pakistan. It needs to be recorded that Sardar Ibrahim had been brought up specially to destroy the

Maharaja and the circumstances have been narrated earlier. As regards the second, he was in fact a subject of the Maharaja and his brother, Abdul Hamid Lone was a Judge in the Srinagar court.

These tribesmen had come from Tirah and Waziristan and their main aim was to kill the Dogra soldiers of the Maharaja. Hence they remained in Muzaffarabad for two days and after having succeeded in crossing the river Jehlum through a village rope bridge, fired the first shot on the Dogra military post of Domel in the morning of the 24th October. This sudden and unexpected attack created havoc among the soldiers of the Maharaja, who fled away towards Uri. It was Brigadier Rajindersingh, who put up a strong resistance to the invaders. In the meanwhile, other columns of tribesmen had arrived under Major Khurishid and these were better equipped with arms and ammunition. The Dogra soldiers were less in number and they could not withstand the onslaught of the tribesmen. Despite putting up a heroic resistance, Brigadier Rajindersingh and his soldiers were killed. After this tragedy, the tribesmen proceeded further and burnt down the Power Station at Mahura.²⁹

It all happened on the 24th of October, 1947, when the Maharaja was holding the Dussehra Darbar at the Shergarhi Palace, evening, in Srinagar. Suddenly the electric lights went off and it meant that the Mahura Power Station had been captured and destroyed by the tribals. The Maharaja became anxious and his face turned pale. Without completing his Darbar ceremonies, he left his courtiers and hurried to his family palace on the banks of the Dal Lake. From his palace, the Maharaja sent urgent appeals to the Government of India for help. At the same time, he got disarmed all Muslim soldiers at Srinagar garrison and mobilised youth as a second line of defence.³⁰ The youth, which the Maharaja mobilised were no other than the armed volunteers of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh.

From Mahura, the tribesmen reached Baramulla without any resistance. The first thing they did was to burn and pillage the town. The main bazar was set on fire and then open loot, abduction and murder became the order of the day. The Kashmiri Pandits, to a great extent saved themselves by mixing with the Kashmiri Muslims but the Sikhs could do nothing to save themselves. Most of them were killed, some drowned themselves in the Wolar Lake and some fled away towards the mountains. The tribals did not spare Muslims from loot and subjected their co-religionists to much torture. The Punjabee Hindus were captured and killed by the invaders. It was an avalanche of looting, pillaging, burning, killing, right from Muzaffarabad to Baramulla.³¹

The Government of India took prompt action by discussing the issue in a special meeting of the Defence Committee which met on the 25th of October. V.P. Menon flew to Srinagar in a military plane to give necessary instructions to the Maharaja. He advised Harisingh to leave immediately for Jammu with all his valuable possessions. The Maharaja left for Jammu that very evening.³²

Hari Singh's flight to Jammu has evoked much criticism from many

writers. One such writer remarks that the Maharaja had fled to Jammu in the dead of night, with all his property including carpets, Bronzes, gold, silver and jewels, leaving Srinagar and its people to their fate.³³ The most severe criticism came from the people, who staged dramas about the nightmarish exodus of the Maharaja and his courtiers along with their valuables. However, according to Balraj Madhok, the Maharaja's flight to Jammu was exploited by Pandit Nehru and Sheikh Abdullah to lower down the position of the Maharaja in the eyes of his own subjects.³⁴ The story about the cowardly flight of the Maharaja has been defended by Bhagwan Singh by laying a counter attack on Sheikh Abdullah in the following words :

"Even Sheikh Abdullah the then Sher-i-Kashmir (Lion of Kashmir), who made political capital out of Maharaja's move to Jammu had already quietly fled to Indore with his family, of course on the pretext of meeting his brother-in-law".³⁵

However, the fact remains that Hari Singh left Srinagar under the strong advice of Menon, who had flown to Srinagar on that very day with necessary instructions from the Government of India. While flying back to Delhi, Menon took along with him Sheikh Abdullah, for necessary discussions.³⁶

The story of the cowardly flight of the Maharaja, on the night of 27th October, 1947, given by his son is summarised below :

"Death and destruction were fast approaching Srinagar, our snug world had collapsed around us, the wheels of destiny had turned full circle. Suddenly there was a flurry of activity.

Finally the convey began to move. My father drove his own car with Victor Rosenthal at his side and two staff officers with loaded revolvers in the back seat.

All through that dreadful night we drove, slowly, haltingly, as if reluctant to leave the beautiful valley that our ancestors had ruled for generations".³⁷

But the people were defenceless, and, although they held up the enemy's onrush, prolonged resistance to well trained and well equipped invaders became out of question. The invaders were meanwhile pushing ahead, destroying and looting whatever came their way, and the city of Srinagar stood in grave peril. Those were inspiring days. The whole people of Srinagar under the leadership of Sheikh Abdullah, Bakshi and Sadiq had risen as one man against the raiders. Not one Kashmiri said that the raiders should be welcomed because they were Muslims.³⁸

Sher-i-Kashmir, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah gave a clarion call for raising 15,000 volunteers. Almost simultaneously volunteers, were moving in towns and cities, working day and night to maintain communal harmony. It was at this critical hour that more than 10,000 intrepid volunteers unmindful of their lives, came forward and taking up the arms of deserted soldiers, guarded

all Government institutions, banks, treasury, telephone and telegraph lines, post offices, bridges, provision stores, etc.³⁹

As soon as Pakistan's aggression in Kashmir was known in India, it had an electrifying effect on the minds of the people at large. All differences of opinion were forgotten, all disputes pending between different political parties were hushed and the country rose like one man to resist the aggression. Differences of religion, differences of caste, community and language were completely obliterated, and the whole of India presented the unique sight of a nation determined to defend Kashmir.⁴⁰

The National Conference decided that only way to save Kashmir from the marauders was to accede to India and ask for help. Consequently, the Maharaja signed the Instrument of Accession on the 26th of October, 1947 at Jammu and sent it alongwith his letter for help to the Government of India through Menon, who had flown to Jammu from Delhi for obtaining the signatures of Hari Singh.

The final letter of the Maharaja to Mountbatten is reproduced below :

My dear Lord Mountbatten,

I have to inform Your Excellency that a grave emergency has arisen in my State and request the immediate assistance of Your Government. As Your Excellency is aware, the State of Jammu and Kashmir has not acceded to either the Dominion of India or Pakistan. Geographically my State is contiguous with both of them. Besides, my State has a common boundary with the Union of Soviet Socialistic Republic and with China. In their external relations the Dominions of India and Pakistan cannot ignore this fact. I wanted to take time to decide to which Dominion, I should accede or whether it is not in the best interest of both the Dominions and of my State independent; of course, with friendly and cordial relations with both. I, accordingly approached the Dominions of India and Pakistan to enter into a Standstill Agreement with my State. The Pakistan Government accepted this arrangement. The Dominion of India desired further discussion with representatives of my Government. I could not arrange this in view of the developments indicated below. In fact, the Pakistan Government under the Standstill Agreement is operating the Post and Telegraph system inside the State. Though we have got a Standstill Agreement with the Pakistan Government, that Government permitted a steady and increasing strangulation of supplies like food, salt and petrol to my State.

Afridis, soldiers in plain clothes, and desperadoes with modern weapons have been allowed to infiltrate into the State, first in the Poonch area, then from Sialkot and finally in a mass in the area adjoining the Hazara District on Ramkot side. The result has been that the limited number of troops at the disposal of the State had to be dispersed and thus had to face the enemy at several points simultaneously, so that it has become difficult to stop the wanton destruction of life and property and the looting of the Mahura Power House,

which supplies electric current to the whole of Srinagar and which has been burnt. The number of women who have been kidnapped and raped makes my heart bleed. The wild forces thus let loose on the State are marching on with the aim of capturing Srinagar, the summer capital of my Government, as a first step to overcoming the whole State. The mass infiltration of tribesmen drawn from distant areas of the North West Frontier Province, coming regularly in motor trucks using the Mansehra Muzaffarabad road and fully armed with upto-date weapons cannot possibly be done without the knowledge of the provincial Government of the N.W.F. Province and the Government of Pakistan. In spite of repeated appeals made by my Government no attempt has been made to check these raiders or stop them from coming into my State. In fact both the Radio and Press of Pakistan have reported these occurrences. The Pakistan Radio even put out the story that a provisional Government has been set up in Kashmir. The people of my State both Muslims and non-Muslims generally have taken no part at all.

With the conditions obtaining at present in my State and the great emergency of the situation as it exists, I have no option but to ask for help from the Indian Dominion. Naturally, they cannot send the help asked for by me without my State acceding to the Dominion of India. I have accordingly decided to do so and I attach the Instrument of Accession for acceptance by your Government. The other alternative is to leave my State and the people to free booters. On this basis no civilized Government can exist or be maintained. This alternative I will never allow to happen so long as I am the ruler of the State and I have life to defend my country.

I may also inform Your Excellency's Government that it is my intention at once to set up an interim Government and to ask Sheikh Abdullah to carry the responsibilities in this emergency with my Prime Minister.

If my State is to be saved, immediate assistance must be made available at Srinagar. Mr. V.P. Menon is fully aware of the gravity of the situation and will explain it to you, if further explanation is needed.

In haste and with kindest regards,

The Palace, Jammu
26th October, 1947

Your sincerely,
Harisingh.

The Maharaja had informed the Government of India about his intention to set up an interim government and ask Sheikh Abdullah to carry the responsibilities with his Prime Minister. This shows that at last, the Maharaja had bowed down before the pre-condition of Pandit Nehru, though reluctantly, to take Sheikh Abdullah into confidence. Sardar Patel was anxiously waiting for Menon, who was carrying Accession papers, at the Delhi airport.⁴¹ The Defence Committee met at once and discussed ways and means of saving Kashmir from the Pakistani invaders. While accepting the Instrument of Accession, the Governor General of India wrote back as under :

My dear Maharaja Sahib,

Your Highness's letter dated the 26th October has been delivered to me by Mr. V.P. Menon. In the special circumstances mentioned by Your Highness, my Government have decided to accept the accession of Kashmir State to the Dominion of India. Consistently with their policy that, in the case of any State where the issue of accession has been the subject of dispute, the question of accession should be decided in accordance with the wishes of the people of the State, it is my Government's wish that, as soon as law and order have been restored in Kashmir and her soil cleared of the invader, the question of the State's accession should be settled by a reference to the people. Meanwhile, in response to Your Highness's appeal for military aid, action has been taken today to send troops of the Indian army to Kashmir, to help your own forces to defend your territory and to protect the lives, property and honour of your people.

My Government and I note with satisfaction that Your Highness has decided to invite Sheikh Abdullah to form an Interim Government to work with your Prime Minister.

Yours sincerely,
Mountbatten of Burma

The decision to accede to India was not only natural in the circumstances but also the logical outcome of the ideals and objectives of the freedom movement. Its own experience in Kashmir and the understanding of the role of the National Congress and Muslim League in the Indian freedom struggle in general and vis-a-vis the State people's movement in particular had convinced the National Conference leadership that the Kashmiri people's movement for freedom and national progress could flourish only as part of the broader movement of the Indian people. The community of ideals and principles established between the people's movement of Kashmir and the rest of the country in course of about two decades served as the natural basis for Kashmir's accession to India.

Pakistan in Quandary

As soon as the Pakistan Government heard about the accession of Kashmir with India, the Governor General of Pakistan Qaid-i-Azam Jinnah ordered General Gracy to attack the Jammu and Kashmir State. But the latter refused to comply without the approval of the Supreme Commander of the Joint Forces, Field Marshall Auchinleck.⁴² Jinnah accused India of keeping Pakistan in the dark about the decision to send troops. Mountbatten assured Jinnah of India's genuine intentions in asking that Kashmir's future should be decided by the will of its people.⁴³

The Pakistani Prime Minister, Liaquat Ali Khan convened a hurried Defence Committee meeting at Lahore for discussion. It was attended by the

Chief Ministers of N.W.F. Province, Punjab and senior military commanders including, Brigadier Akbar Khan. The army commanders advised attack on Jammu but Liaquat Ali Khan did not agree fearing reprisal and retaliation by India. As such, it was decided to provide guidance, aid, arms and ammunition to the tribal invaders. In order to carry on the scheme, Brigadier Akbar Khan was authorised to implement the orders of the Government of Pakistan. He assumed the name of General Tariq and reached Baramulla on the 29th of October, 1947. On enquiry, as to why the tribals had not moved forward, he came to know that it was Major Khurshid, who wanted to bargain about his future position in the conquered Kashmir, with Sardar Ibrahim, who had assumed the position of the President of Azad Kashmir Government on the 24th of October, 1947. Brigadier Akbar Khan reached near the outskirts of Srinagar but seeing the onward march of the Indian army fled back to Rawalpindi.⁴⁴

Having brought a large stretch of territory under their occupation, the invaders were now threatening Srinagar itself. It was at this grave hour of Kashmir's history that the National Conference gave a call for resistance to invaders. The people rallied as one man around the National Conference. Volunteer Committees were formed and a National Militia set up. The National Conference took over the administration and maintained ceaseless vigilance against enemy infiltration into the city. Perfect communal harmony prevailed in Kashmir and Hindus and Muslims alike joined the volunteer forces of National Conference. The Times London wrote that "inspite of the proximity of the raiders and comparatively heavy fighting 4 1/2 miles west of Srinagar, Srinagar remains calm and business continues as usual". The paper added that the "situation is quite unreal" and can be explained by the fact that the National Conference has continued to instil confidence into the citizens. The people in occupied areas responded magnificently to the call for resistance. Many Kashmiri Muslims fell in the battle. Prominent among them were Mohammad Maqbool Sherwani and Master Abdul Aziz.

It goes to the credit of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference and its volunteers, who valiantly came forward to defend Kashmir and maintain communal harmony. From every part of the city of Srinagar came the following slogans :

Hamlaa war Khabardar, Ham Kashmiri hein taiyar
(Invaders beware, we Kashmiris are alert)
Hamlaawar Khabardar, national fauj hai taiyar
(Invaders beware, national army is alert)

The first contingent of the Indian Army arrived in Srinagar on October 27 and more reinforcements poured into Kashmir thereafter. The arrival of troops sent a thrill of joy all over the State and Kashmiris came out in thousands to welcome the sentinels of peace and freedom.

About the role of the Indian Army, Mahatama Gandhi said :

"Pakistan has invaded Kashmir and Indian Army has also gone there, but not with the intention of attack, but at the request of the Maharaja and Sheikh Abdullah. In my views, Sheikh Abdullah is the true Maharaja of that place. Thousands of Muslims are ready to lay down their lives for him. They call him Sher-i-Kashmir. He says he is a Muslim. But that kind of Muslim is he! He unites all Hindu, Sikhs and Muslims. Why this *jehad* against these Muslims. I implore the Government of Pakistan, as a friend, because I am enemy of none. Islam is there also. You say that the greatest power which Pakistan has, is Islam. You can keep this power if every Hindu and Sikh, though he may be a sinner, feels safe in your land. Justice should be done with them and they should be safe-guarded. But I find something contrary today. As such, I will say to Pakistan and India both that they should join to settle. When both want to settle, then there is no need to call for the third power".⁴⁵

The National Conference, the largest and the most influential party in the State, upheld the decision. A resolution passed at a special convention held in October, 1948, to consider the matter, declared :

"This convention has given its serious thought to the question of accession and has examined it in all its aspects and detail. After mature consideration of the issue it is definitely of the opinion that Kashmir, with its unflinching faith in New Kashmir and with the very advanced outlook of the people on the fundamental issues, cannot find its proper place in Pakistan which today has become the main citadel of reaction and decaying feudalism. . . Pakistan with its basis in two nation theory and its persistence in the perpetuation of religious distinctions does not and cannot accommodate a programme and an outlook which is the very negative of its basis and conceptions of social justice."

National Conference Takes Over

With great reluctance, Maharaja Hari Singh, appointed Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah as the Head of Emergency Administration, on 31 October, 1947 without demarcating his powers. His intention was to keep the Emergency Administration under the thumb of his Prime Minister, Mehr Chand Mahajan. The Maharaja could not visualise that Sheikh Abdullah had derived his power from the people of the State and not from the Maharaja. An observer of Kashmir affairs has remarked :

"The National Conference was not installed into power with the help of Indian bayonets; it just was there and filled the breach, exercising *de facto* powers of the Government, on its own initiative and inherent strength.

several days before the Maharaja, after long and tortuous debates, gave it *de jure* recognition. Sheikh Abdullah was not put there from the air, he had his feet very much planted on the ground in Kashmir".⁴⁶

Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah took charge as the Head of Administration on the 30th of October, 1947 with the following Emergency Council :

Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, Deputy Head of Administration
Mirza Afzal Beg, Emergency Officer, Anantnag
G.M. Sadiq, Emergency Officer, Internal Security
S.L. Saraf, Emergency Officer, Supplies
G.L. Dogra, Emergency Officer, Kathua
Sardar Buddh Singh, Emergency Officer, Goodwill Mission
Pandit J.L. Kilam, Emergency Officer, Food
Molvi Mohammad Syed, Emergency Officer, Publicity
Mohi-ud-din Kara, Emergency Officer, Communications
Abdul Ahad, Emergency Officer, Firewood
Sofi Mohammad Akbar, Emergency Officer, Baramulla
Peer Mohammad Maqbool, Emergency Officer, Uri
Pandit Kashapa Bandhu, Emergency Officer, Rehabilitation
Mohi-ud-din Hamadani, Emergency Officer, Peace Brigade
Pandit D.P. Dhar, Emergency Officer, Law and Order
Ahsan Ullah, Emergency Officer, Transport
Mohammad Amin, Emergency Officer, Banihal
Munshi Mohammad Ishaq, Emergency Officer, Badgam
Col. Adalat Khan, Emergency Officer, Bhadrawah
Col. Baldev Singh Samval, Emergency Officer, Border Scouts
Col. Ram Lal, Emergency Officer, Home Guards
Col. Baldev Singh Pathania, Chief Emergency Officer, Jammu

In addition to it, Pandit J.N. Zutshi was appointed as Secretary of the Emergency Council.

Immediate Tasks

The timely help of the Indian army saved Kashmiri people from further wanton destruction, loot and murder. The heroic men of the army, supported by the Kashmir Militia, pushed the raiders beyond Uri. The armed threat to Srinagar and to the rest of the valley was removed.

But the treacherous invasion left behind a trail of sorrow and tears. It caused a serious dislocation in the life of the people of the State and threw its entire economy out of joint. Thousands of people found themselves destitute and homeless. Hospitals and dispensaries had been demolished by invaders and were in ruins. The equipment had been removed or damaged and stores destroyed. The entire transport organization had broken down. The invaders had also damaged roads, buildings and bridges in the State.

These and several other problems faced the first popular Government which assumed power in October, 1947. The National Conference leadership which manned the Emergency Administration did not lose heart; it tackled all those problems one by one. The administration received liberal and selfless support from the Government of India in rehabilitating the State's economy. The Central Government rushed food and other essential supplies for the people of the State.

The most important problem facing the administration was the resettlement of the people displaced from enemy occupied areas. In April, 1948, the number of refugees was 42,136 in Srinagar. It was 700,000 in Jammu Province, of which 300,000 were to be looked after in Jammu city alone. Free rations, milk, medicines and clothes provided to them. They were given shelter in temples, mosques, gurdawaras and schools. In Jammu, where the refugee problem was very acute, the displaced persons were housed in Government buildings, schools, cinema halls, factories etc.

Another serious problem demanding urgent attention was the rebuilding of the shattered transport system of the State. Before the partition of India, the entire commerce of Jammu and Kashmir State was carried through the Banihal and Jehlum Valley roads which were linked with rail-heads at Jammu and Rawalpindi. As a result of the invasion the Jehlum Valley road was cut off completely and most of the vehicles plying on it were either destroyed or seized by Pakistan. To tide over this difficulty the Government set up a transport organisation of its own and brought a fleet of new trucks and buses. This measure helped to maintain the flow of supplies to various parts of the State and also in sending out Kashmir art products, timber etc. for sale in other parts of India.

The women of Kashmir in crisis hours of 1947, in November, realised that they were in a bottle-neck of land, and that the first heavy snowfall would shut off their only link with a friendly outside world.

It was a bitter challenge. It had to be met, and the Women's Self-Defence Corps was the answer. Women supporters were the pivot of this new movement, which made an immediate and rousing appeal to women of all communities in Srinagar.

Allied to the military and political work of the corps was its essentially womanly work of social service. Fruits, sweets and eggs were distributed by the Corps in the Military Hospital and messages of good cheer were given by them to the valiant defenders of Kashmir's frontiers. Similar service was also rendered in the men's and women's ward of the hospital where poor Kashmiri men and women for the first time realised that there was *Awami Raj* in Kashmir, and that Sher-i-Kashmir was really troubled about the sufferings of the poor.⁴⁷

The combined action of the popular will and Indian Military forces led to a turn in the tide. The raiders were beaten and before long were being chased back into Pakistan.⁴⁸ Mahatama Gandhi Said :

"When the soldiers lay down their lives for saving Srinagar, the whole of Kashmir would be saved, What would happen after this ? Kashmir would belong to Kashmiris ! What Sheikh Abdullah says, I understand fully and that is that Kashmir belong to Kashmiris and not the Maharaja".⁴⁹

Pandit Nehru's Pledge

On the 11th of November, 1947, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru arrived in Srinagar. He was given a tumultuous reception by thousands of Kashmiris, roaring : "Pandit Nehru Zindabad, Sher-i-Kashmir Zindabad, Sher-i-Kashmir Ka Kiya Irshad—Hindu Muslim Sikh Itihad. In a mammoth meeting at Lal Chowk, Srinagar, Pandit Nehru declared :

"You the people of Srinagar have presented a model lesson to the people of India. The Sher-i-Kashmir has shown to the rest of India and to the world, how to achieve communal unity and freedom.

We have declared that the fate of Kashmir is ultimately to be decided by the people. That pledge we have given not only to the people of Kashmir but to the world. We will not and cannot break backout of it".⁵⁰

Pandit Nehru pledged India's fullest support to the people of Kashmir in defence of their freedom.⁵¹ Mahatama Gandhi, the Father of the Nation said in a Prayer meeting :

"Understand Kashmir. The Maharaja of Kashmir had asked us to come and send armies to save him from trouble. Still our armies could not have been sent, but for Sheikh Abdullah. He is the true ruler of Kashmir. If he would have spoken for Muslims only, then he could never be the true ruler of Kashmir. But every Hindu, Sikh, Parsi and Christian is with him. If Sheikh Abdullah or the State subjects say. Here is the majority of Muslims and the say of the Muslims should prevail. As such please go and take out your armies. If even the Maharaja says that the armies should be kept, I will then tell the armies could not be kept there and it shall have to return".⁵²

The National Cultural Front was born in the midst of peril. In that dark hour, tens of thousands mustered strong in response to the call of Sher-i-Kashmir, and, among them was a small nucleus of veteran National Conference workers and conscious writers, actors and artists, who organised themselves under the name of the National Cultural Front. They put themselves to the writing of militant songs, plays, articles and news bulletins and to painting of fighting posters, banners and scenes of battle. They were determined to forge ahead and create such art and literature as would meet the demand of the hour and would enable them to contribute their mite to the defence of the motherland. The National Cultural Front launched a powerful propaganda drive to

counteract the underground propaganda conducted by the enemy agents, calculated mainly to spread panic and confusion and to unmask the real face of the enemy, who was adopting dangerous communal subterfuge to create rift in the ranks of the people.⁵³

The special staff operated in the Tehsils of Jammu, Akhnur, Reasi, Ranbirsinghpoura, Samba, and parts of Kathua and Hiranagar. Majority of abducted women and children in these areas was rescued, although it was believed that there were still quite a few in unknown hands who were holding them back as long as they could. The special staff was, however, determined not to sit still until every single abducted woman was rescued. As a result of their ceaseless efforts, the total number of women and children recovered by the special staff during the period from January 12, 1948 to April 25, 1948 was 608 women and 84 children.⁵⁴

Agrarian Reforms

Immediately after the assumption of office in 1948, the National Conference Government introduced a number of bold measures to tackle the complex problem of building rural economy. Besides the fact that thousands of rural inhabitants were landless and made their living by working as agricultural labourers on big landed estates, there were many others whose land holdings were uneconomic and who had to supplement their financial resources by raising loans from money lenders, wad-dars, grain dealers and other similar intermediaries. There were still others who mortgaged their belongings and particularly the produce of their fields in advance to defray expenditure on social customs, like marriages, births, deaths etc.

The State Government resumed all the jagirs and muafies with effect from 13th April, 1948 and compensated the muafidars and jagirdars by grant of life time maintenance allowances in their favour. A legislation entitled 'Big Landed Estates Abolition Act of 1950' was also enacted limiting the size of agricultural holdings held in proprietary rights to 182 kanals only. Lands which thus became available were allotted to agricultural labourers and to those whose holdings were uneconomic.

Debt conciliation Boards were also set up in each district to scale down the debts which had assumed dreadful proportions. The Board generally wrote off the interests and adjusted the payments already made against the original loan.

Abdication of Hari Singh

Hari Singh and Sheikh Abdullah were two wayward persons and represented different cultures. There could be no possibility of any compromise between the two opposites. Hari Singh represented the feudal order of the rajas while Sheikh Abdullah represented the aspirations of the people. The Sheikh had started his political career in 1931 on the foundation of anti-Maharaja and anti-Dogra base. He was the leader of the most powerful political party in the State.

As such, the Maharaja did not see eye to eye with the Sheikh and disapproved of all his actions. His plea was that he had been surpassed by his enemy. Sheikh Abdullah became the Head of the Administration in October, 1947 but the Maharaja refused to place his confidence in him. Hardly, a month had elapsed when Pandit Nehru wrote to Hari Singh in these terms :

"As I pointed out to you, the only person who can deliver the goods in Kashmir is Sheikh Abdullah. He may make any number of mistakes in minor matters, but I think he is likely to be right in regard to major decisions. If that is so, full confidence must be placed in him. Even if a risk has to be taken in giving this full confidence, that risk has to be taken".⁵⁵

The hostility between Hari Singh and Sheikh Abdullah was greatly heightened by the fact that a barrage of propaganda was launched by the National Conference against Hari Singh on two counts.

- (a) Hari Singh had fled away to Jammu in the dead of night leaving his people to mercy of the Pakistani tribals.
- (b) Hari Singh had fomented communal riots in Jammu resulting in the massacre of thousands of Muslims.⁵⁶

Hari Singh had appointed Sheikh Abdullah as his Prime Minister on the 5th of March, 1948, but had reserved some prerogatives and powers in his person. As the dyarchy could not function beyond a few months, a very serious crisis developed in the State. Under such circumstances, the National Conference leaders asked for the abdication of Hari Singh.⁵⁷

Kashmir and United Nations

On January 1, 1948, the Government of India handed a complaint against Pakistan to the President of the Security Council under Article 35 of the United Nations' Charter and requested :

- (a) to prevent Pakistan Government personnel—military and civil—from participating or assisting in the invasion of the Jammu and Kashmir State;
- (b) to call upon other Pakistani nationals to desist from taking part in the fighting in that State;
- (c) to deny the invaders access through Pakistani territory and to stop military and other supplies.

At the same time, the Council was warned that if it failed to give effective relief, India might be compelled to enter Pakistani territory in self-defence.⁵⁸

The Security Council immediately put this issue on its agenda and discussions began on it from the 15th January. After 4 months hard work, the

Security Council passed its first Resolution on the 21st of April, 1948 by appointing a Commission, consisting of 5 members, called the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP). The Commission was asked to proceed to the sub-continent, ascertain facts and suggest a solution for resolving the dispute.

It was in July 1948 that the Commission submitted its suggestions before the Security Council, which passed a Resolution on the 13th of August, 1948. This Resolution was later on supplemented by an another Resolution dated 5th January, 1949. Both these two Resolutions were accepted by India and Pakistan.

The August Resolution of the Security Council envisages as under :

(a) *Ceasefire Order*

The Government of India and Pakistan agree that their respective High Commands will issue separately and simultaneously a ceasefire order to apply to all forces under their control in the State of Jammu and Kashmir as of the earliest practicable date or dates to be mutually agreed upon within four days after the proposals have been accepted by both Governments. In its discretion and as the Commission may find practicable, the Commission will appoint military observers who, under the authority of the Commission and with the co-operation of both commands, will supervise the observance of the ceasefire order.

(b) *Truce Agreement*

The Government of Pakistan agrees to withdraw its troops from that State and use its best endeavour to secure the withdrawal from the State of tribesmen and Pakistan nationals.

Pending a final solution, the territory evacuated by the Pakistani troops will be administered by the local authorities under the surveillance of the Commission. When the Commission shall have notified the Government of India that the tribesmen and Pakistani nationals, referred to above, have withdrawn, the Government of India agrees to begin to withdraw the bulk of its forces from that State in stages to be agreed upon with the Commission. Pending the acceptance of the conditions for a final settlement, the Indian Government will maintain the minimum strength of its forces, considered necessary to assist local authorities in the observance of law and order.

(c) The Government of India and the Government of Pakistan reaffirm their wish that the future status of the State of Jammu and Kashmir shall be determined in accordance with the will of the people and to that end, upon acceptance of the truce agreement both the Governments agree to enter into consultations with the Commission to

determine fair and equitable conditions whereby such free expression will be assured.

The ceasefire agreement became effective one minute before midnight of 31st December, 1948. The work of demarcating the ceasefire line was started and a dozen countries deputed their observers who set up their headquarters at Rawalpindi and Srinagar. The 5th January Resolution envisaged nomination of a Plebiscite Administrator by the Secretary General of the United Nations for organising and conducting the plebiscite in a free and impartial way. This Resolution declared that the question of the accession of Kashmir to India or Pakistan would be decided through democratic method of a free and impartial plebiscite.⁵⁹

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20. Speech of Mahatama Gandhi dated 10th October, 1947
21. Bhagwan Singh, *Political Conspiracies of Kashmir*, p. 53.
22. F.A.Abba, *Profile of Abdullah*, pp. 97-98. Mehr Chand Mahajan also states the same event, adding that after meeting Pandit Nehru he went back to the State and negotiations started with legal advisors of the National Conference.
23. Balraj Madhok. *Bungling in Kashmir*, p. 50
24. Prime Minister of India to Prime Ministe of Kashmir. Dt. 20th Oct. 1947.
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26. Sana Ullah But, *Kashmir (1947-1977)*, pp. 23-24.
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30. Balraj Madhok, *Bungling in Kasumir*, p. 58.
31. Joseph Corbel, *Danger in Kashmir*, p. 75.
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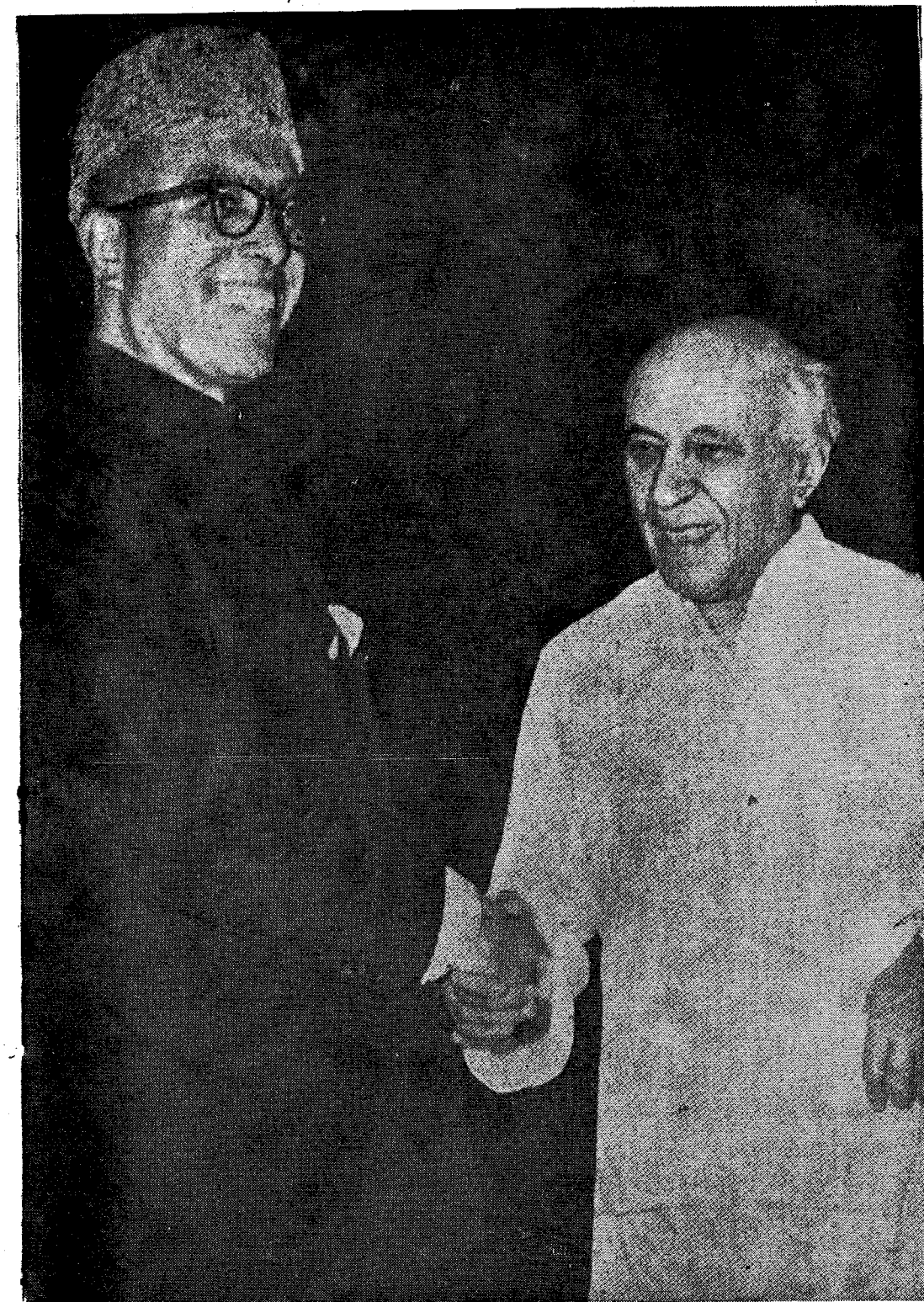


Fig. 1. Sheikh Abdullah and Pandit Nehru, 1964



Fig. 2. Sheikh Abdullah and Pandit Nehru in Lal Chowk. Srinagar 1948 Accession with India.



Fig. 3. Central Jail, Srinagar, where Maulana Abdul Qadir Khan was interned. 13th July, 1931.



Fig. 5. Khanqah-i-Maulaa—the pivot of freedom movement in Kashmir. 1931



Fig. 6. Baramulla Road where Pakistani invaders were stopped



Fig. 7. Pandit Nehru with Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, Vice President of the National Conference, 1950



Fig. 8. Mir Waiz Maulna Mohammad Yosuf Shah-one among the founder of the Freedom movement in Kashmir.

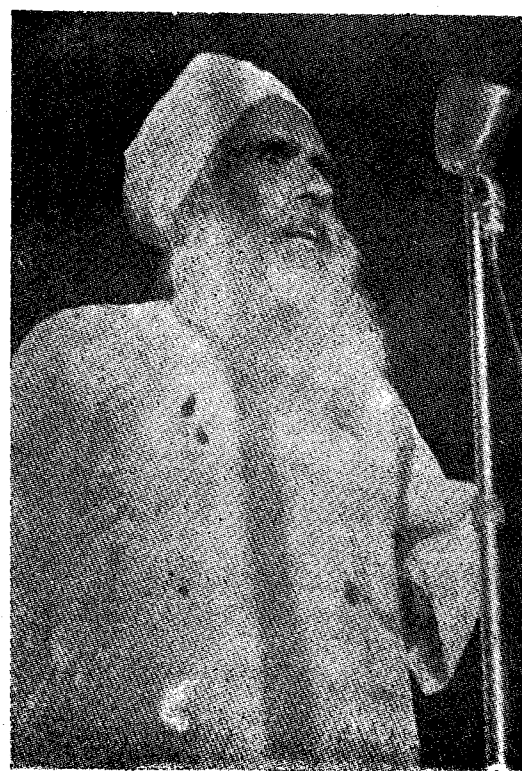


Fig. 9. Sardar Buddh Singh, Prominent Leader of the National Conference.

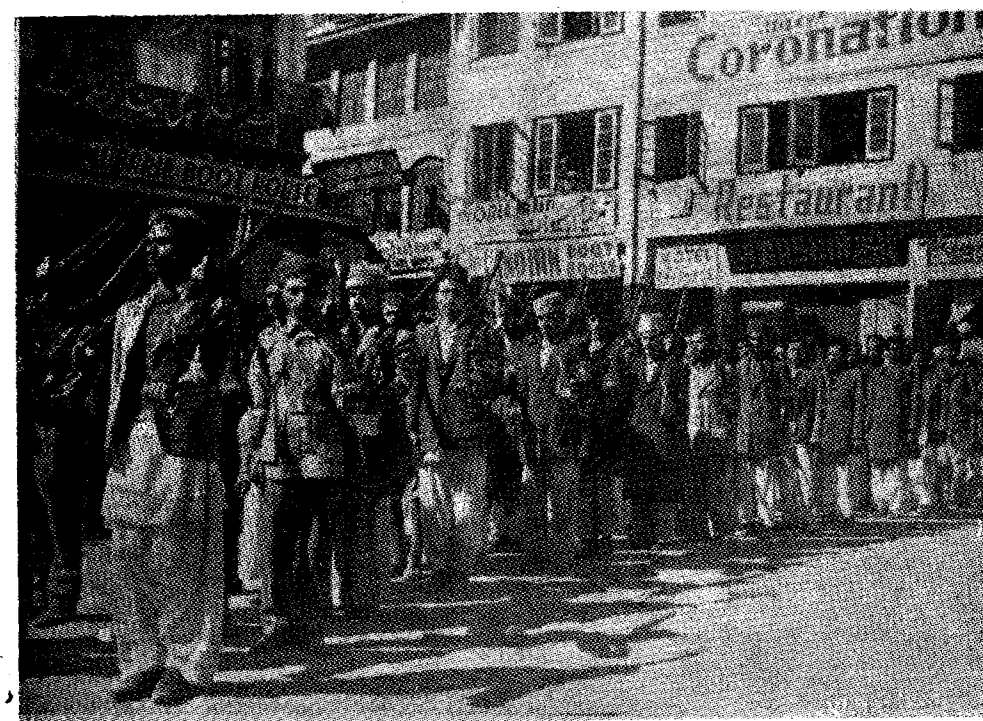


Fig. 10. National Militia. 1947



Fig. 11. Women Militia of the National Conference 1947.



Fig. 12. Kashmiri Boys with Kangris for heating purposes